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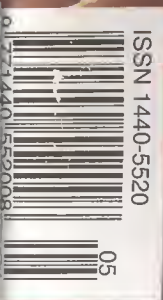
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KEYWORD: AOL TOUR



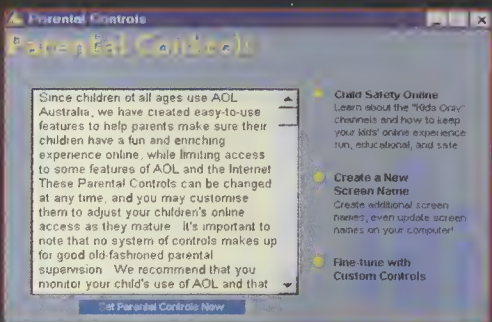
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KEYWORD: INTERNATIONAL



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KEYWORD: PARENTAL CONTROLS

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


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Exploring the Cape

We'll be back in July...

Looking for something to do? Next month we show you 20 top time wasters online. You'll also find out where to get tickets to sporting events, concerts and travel. Learn how satellite delivery works and who is using it to bring you super fast services. We also rate the latest notebooks to hit the market and teach the basics of creating a Web page in the first of our series on FrontPage 2000.

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FEATURES

Now screening

Film fans can use the force to guide them to the best movie resources online. You'll find trailers, reviews, games and more. | **26**

Sweetest online goodies

The Net offers some great shareware software. We hunt down the most exciting dozen things you can download at little cost. | **32**

Look who's talking

Save great wods of cash using Internet telephony software. You can use it to call anywhere in the world. | **38**

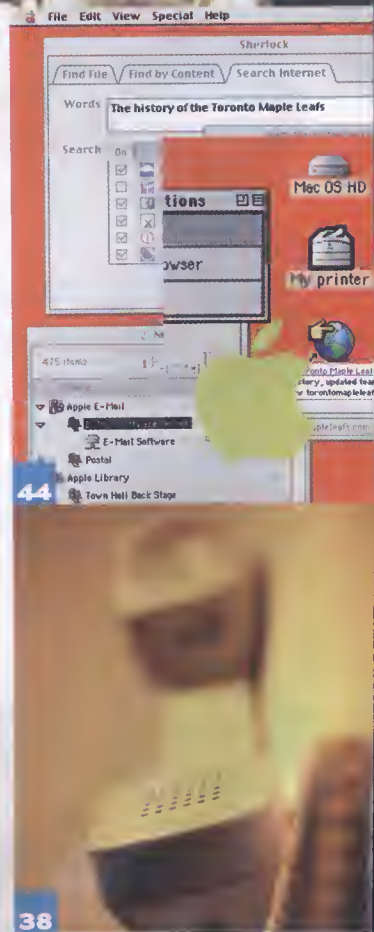
Make mine Macintosh

Not everyone uses Windows. We check out some of the alternative operating systems, starting off on planet Mac. | **44**

TUTORIAL

Filter your mailer

Save time and stress by learning how to use your email software more efficiently. | **52**



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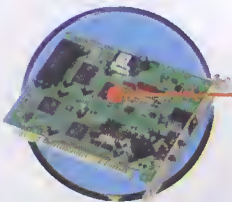
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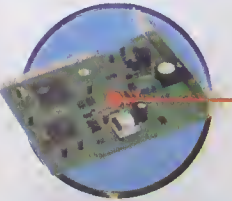
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NetGuide

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FROM THE EDITOR

IT HAS BEEN A somewhat frantic time of recent for the Senator for Communications, Arts and Information Technology, Richard Alston. He's been busy trying to sell his plans to clean up the Web to a reluctant Internet industry. Will the Senator manage to change the face of the digital landscape, making the Internet safe for kids? As he's this month's Net Celeb, read on and get an update from the source on this and other issues such as Y2K and digital television.

It's an exciting time to be online and not just because of these developments. Few films have been anticipated more than George Lucas' new *Star Wars* epic, *The Phantom Menace*. The hype has been intense on the Net, as fan sites fight for the latest scoops. Download trailers, read up on the making of the film and find out the latest news. In fact, browsing for movies can be a rich experience. We show you where to get reviews, film clips and screening times for your local cinema.

NetGuide readers will also discover the best things in life are often free, or close to, as Bruce-Davis Goff reveals 12 of the best shareware downloads for your enjoyment. And the savings continue, as we explain how you can use Internet telephony to cut back on your phone bill. International calls can be made at a fraction of the cost of using dedicated telephone lines. We rate the best software options to use.

And for those who are looking to escape the world of Windows, Bill Bennett observes that things are looking brighter on planet Mac in our feature on alternative operating systems. Also, learn how to filter your email and set up an automatic response in this month's tutorial feature.

Finally, Top 50 keeps your browsing hot as it covers sites on everything from law to weird experiments.

Till next time,

Daniel Fallon
EDITOR

Mailbox

Send email to neted@netguide.aust.com. All are assumed for publication unless clearly stated otherwise. Include your full name and a contact phone number where possible. *NetGuide* reserves the right to edit letters for brevity, style and clarity and we don't guarantee publication.

Unzip please

Dear *NetGuide*,

I think your magazine is great, especially Top 50. It's good for both experienced and new users of the Net. I need some advice. Recently I tried to download a Game Boy emulator. I did this but it is a zip folder and I can't make it work. Is there software for getting out the emulator out from the Zip folder?

/ Camilo Bustamante.

Use WinZip to unzip the files. You can download a trial version of it from www.winzip.com. / Ed

OzEmail price hike

Dear *NetGuide*,

I get your mag every month — keep up the good work. It amused me to see a heading in your ISP News sec-

tion of your mag stating "OzEmail cuts access costs" (*NetGuide*, May).

What they have actually done is increased their costs, I'll explain. The OzMegaSaver was initially \$44.95 per month for unlimited access. This then was changed to a service that kicked you off after six hours. It has recently been changed to \$34.95 for only 150 hours. I used around 320 hours a month for the cost of \$44.95. Now with the new pricing I get the first 150 hours for \$34.95 and then am charged additional hours at \$3.00 per hour. This comes to a total of \$544.95, an increase on the original plan of \$500.00 per month. Am I doing my maths wrong or something, this definitely looks like a 1,112% increase to me, not a 22% reduction as quoted in the article. /

Steve Brown

As you suggest, while OzEmail has cut the price on its OzMegaSaver deal it has also significantly cut the access time with it. So the new price will end up being more expensive for frequent Net users.

Readers do not need to be fooled by this. However, if you're spending 320 hours a month online — over 10 hours a day — you should be looking for a better option for access. Try an ISDN cable — it may help your maths. / Ed

Little blessing

Dear *NetGuide*,

I have just read my first copy of *NetGuide* and I must say I was very impressed. Being on the Net for a year now I still have problems negotiating my way around it — that was until now. I found Internet addresses that had dogged me for ages — I think I will be purchasing your mag each month from now on. / Armsey

TV surfing

Dear *NetGuide*,

Has it happened to you? You're watching your favourite TV program and at the end flashes up the program's Web address. You dive for a pen, but within a flash of an eye it's all gone. You search the Net for the program and get directed to just about anything related to TV the world over. If you're lucky

READER TIPS ►►

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Teacher resource www.bc.org.au/montage

Melbourne Storm Chasers www.rubix.net.au/~cadence

Victorian Frog Group www.frogs.org.au

Correction: In the Hosting feature, "Host with the Most" in the March issue of *NetGuide*, Connect (connect.com.au) was wrongly titled 'Connect.com'. Sorry fellas. / Ed

you find what you're looking for,
but you have forgotten what you

Letter of the month

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can download a
from www.winzip.com

OzEmail price

Dear *NetGuide*,
I get your magazine every week. I like it. I like the good work. I see a heading in your

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you find what you're looking for, but you have forgotten what you wanted to look up. Would you please publish a list of Web sites of the regular TV programs? / **Werner Schmidlin**

You can't wait for digital TV too, right? In the mean time you'll find most program information at the various channels' sites: www.ten.com.au, ninemsn.com.au, www.seven.com.au, www.abc.net.au, www.sbs.com.au. / Ed

Real estate

Dear *NetGuide*,

Hi! Just a note to say that your magazine, greatly assists the maze of the Internet. I was wondering if you know of any other sites, other than the ones I've listed below, in regards to selling a residential house on the market? Fairfax.com.au is okay but I haven't received a great response; www.tradingpost.com.au has very limited listings in the property market and rpdata.com.au sells only for real estate agents. I was thinking of something in the lines of www.auto web.com.au for cars — but for houses. If you know of any other sites, I'd be very grateful. / **Brian Barnaby**

Letter of the month

Your readers may be interested to learn of a new discussion forum and announcement service for Web site developers, Web-masters and others professionally interested in the Web. This free forum — called "Australian Website Developers" — can be used to pose and answer Web-related questions, discuss issues of design and programming, offer and seek scripts and applets, learn of jobs going in the Web industry, and much more. Messages posted to the forum can be received via email (either directly or in daily digests) or read on the forum's Web site (at www.eGroups.com/list/austwebdev/). The Web site also has a searchable archive of previously posted messages. To subscribe to this free forum, a blank email message should be sent to austwebdev-subscribe@eGroups.com. / **Geoffrey Marnell**

Let me at it. / Ed

Take a look at www.newsreal estate.com.au, www.realnet.com.au, www.property.com.au and www.showme.net.au. / Ed

Back to school

Dear *NetGuide*,

I am writing in response to a reader's recent letter requesting an *NetGuide* article covering Web Design courses. I wish to advise that TAFE NSW does offer courses in Web Design at Diploma and Certificate level. Crows Nest TAFE has been training Web Production graduates for the last two

years. Please check our course offerings at www.lg.tafensw.edu.au. / **Terry McJannett**

Mortgage broker

Dear *NetGuide*,


I have just been reading in your magazine about the mortgage broker doing business on the Net — "www.eloan.com.au". However, when I tried to visit this site it was not available. / **Allison Pallister**

Eloan is at www.e-loan.com.au. Good pick up. / Ed

LETTER OF THE MONTH receives a copy of the Quicken Deluxe program (valued at \$99) from the Quicken.com.au Investment Centre



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Telstra BigPond readers' choice

Telstra BigPond (www.bigpond.com.au) has won *Australian NetGuide's* Readers' Choice Award for 1999 Best ISP. The service provider was rated as outstanding in three of the four categories by *NETGUIDE* readers, which included quality of access, help desk service, extras on offer and pricing.

Transquip tools up

West Australian-based tool supplier Transquip (www.transquip.com.au) has launched an e-commerce site that enables surfers to purchase a variety of tools online and have them delivered. The site carries around 10,000 items on its database, which users can purchase using their credit card. The site offers good value buys for consumers, according to Transquip director Edward Roose. "Most of the items listed are 20-40% below retail price due to reduced handling costs."

The pricing of the goods includes Australia-wide delivery, although heavier items may incur a delivery charge.

IP mutlicasting debuts with Uncle Doug

The 2WS FM Doug Mulray show is reaching new heights with what may be the first true IP Multicast broadcast in Australasia.

Launched in Sydney in May the show is powered by Telstra's Big Pond Advance 400Kbps cable service. IP Mutlicasting is revolutionary in online broadcasting, allowing better management of audio and video streaming and better quality for the end user. Rather than all users connecting to one source for the stream (as with traditional video and audio streaming), the program is streamed to local hubs, which users in that area connect to.



Mulray says this is an exciting development in Internet technology. "On a technical level it provides faster access, a bigger, better picture and stereo sound. But on an emotional level it's the realisation of a dream — the most fun

you can have with your pants on!" The show is broadcast from 4pm to 7pm EST at www.mulrayfm.com.au.

Telstra Internet and data services managing director David Stokes-McKeon says this broadband technology is the next step in the convergence of cybercasts, radio and television. He says Telstra is negotiating partnerships with other content providers for additional services for the broadband network. "Telstra is not in the business of owning and operating content. What we have to do is partner with industry."

Telstra is lining up a whole range of high-speed access option in the next few months and bundling them into Telstra's new Bigpond advanced service. Stokes-McKeon says a satellite service is expected to be involved in a few months time and trials of ADSL technology should see the 400Kbps service delivered by traditional telephone lines sometime next year.

Internet Auctions arrive at Yahoo!

Bidding warfare is set to hit the shores with the launch of a free online auction service at Yahoo! (auctions.yahoo.com.au).

The service means local users can now buy and sell products locally, as well as internationally, in an online auction environment, without paying any commission to do so. General manager Tony Faure says the launch is part of the company's ongoing commitment to foster online shopping and bring people, products and services together.

"One of the benefits of having a local auction site is that it's much cheaper for the user to pay shipping on something bought from a person in Melbourne than it is on the same product from Montana or Manchester and it doesn't take as long to arrive either."

Once an item is submitted for auction bidding opens. Sellers can set parameters such as the price at which the auction will begin and the length of time it will run, and the reserve price which the seller is willing to sell the item. Once an auction closes bidders will be notified by email if they have the winning bid and will receive contact information for the seller.

The site also features a currency calculator for overseas bids and a charity auction program.

OzEmail prepares for digital TV

Expanding Internet Service Provider OzEmail (www.ozemail.com.au) is getting itself set for the introduction of digital television. The company is one of several Internet companies and telcos, including Telstra and Microsoft, vying for a licence to broadcast a digital channel to homes and businesses across the country. If permitted, the data broadcasting service will provide users with super fast access to Internet type content. Users will need to purchase a special decoder to receive the transmission and a modem to send requests upstream through the Internet. This will be more affordable than buying a completely new digital television, according to OzEmail spokesperson Michael Ward.

Several licensing steps need to be taken by the government before digital services are introduced, but its possible datacasting and digital television products could come to market before the end of the year, Ward says. "You've got to be looking at serious mass market penetration in three to five years... It will be like the mobile phone market, they'll be a frenzy."

Tasting Melbourne

Relaxas Electronic Publishing has expanded its restaurant guide, *Where to Eat* (www.wheretoeat.com.au) to include over 3,000 restaurants in Melbourne, taking the total number of eateries covered to 6,000, including Sydney. Users can either browse through the database or search using criteria such as suburb, cuisine type, price range and name. A list of restaurants is returned and some listings enable users to drill down into menus. Users are also invited to add comments about their favourite eating spots.

ABC goes rural

ABC Online has launched a rural service to provide information for surfers outside metropolitan areas. ABC Rural Online (www.abc.net.au/rural) is a gateway that brings together the resources from the specialist rural and primary industries programming from the ABC in radio, television and online. Visitors can read daily rural news, access an events diary and listen to audio highlights at the site. There is also a rural links section for related primary industry sites.

Virus meltdown

Just as network administrators recover from the Melissa virus, a new more deadly virus is causing havoc across the digital world. Dubbed 'Chernoby', the virus fills file space, erasing a computer's hard drive and disrupting the BIOS, the coding which enables the machine to boot up and operate. The virus can infect PCs running Windows 95 or 98 once an infected program has been launched. Computers in the US, Asia and the UK have been affected but on a much smaller scale than Melissa.

Austar online

Pay TV provider Austar has launched a site at www.austar.com.au, featuring a customisable program guide. Surfers have a choice of viewing channel information by either category or keyword. Categories include movies, sports, kids, smart TV, news or entertainment. Another feature of the site enables visitors to find out whether Austar is available in their suburb, by entering their suburb or postcode.

NAB ramp up services

National Australia Bank (www.national.com.au) has launched its Internet banking service. National Internet Banking lets users transfer funds between National accounts, use BPAY, purchase term deposits, set up and change periodic payments as well as access account balances and up to 100 days of statement information with search and sort functionality. The service will also soon offer a "pay anyone" feature to enable customers to transfer funds to accounts at other banks. The launch will spark a new level of Internet banking services, according to executive general manager, business and personal financial services, Glenn Barnes. "National Internet Banking is the beginning of a revolution that will have a greater impact than ATMs, Eftpos and telephone banking. The pace of change is difficult to predict, but we expect 100,000 customers will be banking routinely with us over the Internet within 12 months."

The service uses digital certificate technology with 1,024 bit RSA keys to authenticate the customer and National to one another, and to provide a means of exchanging keys to assist secure encryption of information.

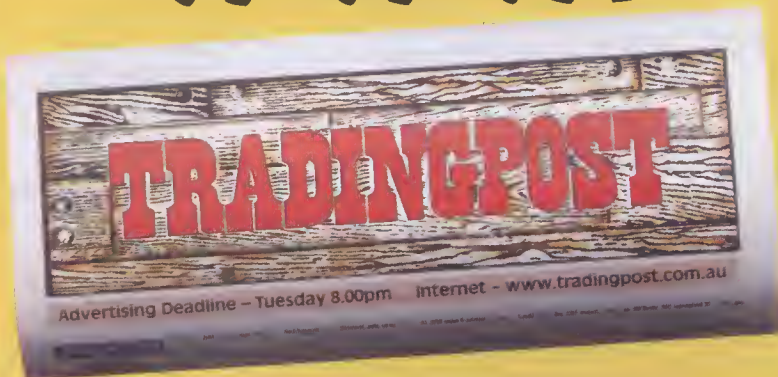
National Internet Banking will be free of fees until early next year, according to National's general manager, retail and channel management, Michael Liley. Once at the Web site, visitors must click on the Internet banking icon to begin downloading the software necessary to start their online banking. Customers will need a National Telephone Banking user number as well.

Spotlight on Darling Harbour

The lights of the Olympic Games will be on Darling Harbour, but spectators can also get a preview through a newly launched Web site www.darlingharbour.com.au.

The site, developed by Internet Design Studios, has been designed to allow locals and visitors easy access to a range of attractions. Users will be able to check out festivals, events, restaurants, accommodation, maps and parking instructions on a fully searchable database. Harbour authority marketing manager Di Murphy says the area is Sydney's second largest Olympic precinct. "Thus it is vital that the site delivers information in a timely and efficient manner."

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Australian Online Music Awards

A consortium of internet, software and media sponsors have teamed up to back the inaugural Australian Online Music Awards, dubbed the ONYA Awards (www.onya.com.au). The awards aim to recognise the best music sites on the Net in fifteen different categories, covering everything from best major record label site, to best music e-zine, to best fan site. Surfers can nominate their favourite site at ONYA online. The inaugural awards were conceived and are being produced by music industry media company Immedia! (www.immedia.com.au).

CDnow & N2K merge

US-based CD seller CDnow and N2K, owner of Music Boulevard (musicblvd.com), have merged, creating a giant global e-commerce company. The new entity will be known as CDnow Inc. The company will operate two online music stores, CDnow and Music Boulevard, as independent platforms up until they merge into one online shopfront on May 18th under the name CDnow (cdnow.com).

Microsoft dives into music

Software giant Microsoft (www.microsoft.com.au) has announced a new Internet technology that is set to challenge music compression standard MP3. MS Audio 4.0 is designed to be a more secure format for transferring files online than MP3, which lets users download files and play them at almost CD level quality and is prone to piracy. The new format, which is part of the Windows Media 4.0 upgrade, is currently in beta. The format will let publishers track the copyright of songs that are downloaded from online retailers as well as enabling digital watermarking to ensure the files aren't easily passed on. Audio 4.0 also allows download times up to twice as fast as MP3 and the player can be included with the music file download, according to Microsoft business development manager Peter Brakatselos.

Mortgages On Line

A new service has been launched to help house hunters find the best mortgage to suit their needs. Telstra Big Pond (www.bigpond.com.au) has joined forces with independent content providers Lenders On Line to help (www.lendersonline.com.au) consumers select the most suitable loan from those offered by a range of financial institutions, including Westpac (www.westpac.com.au) and ANZ (www.anz.com.au). After entering criteria, such as whether they want a fixed or variable loan, Lenders On Line comes back with a suitable loan. Customers can then apply for the loan over the Internet by filling out an online form with their personal details, which are received via a secure server.

Meanwhile, also in home finance, Liberty Financial is pushing LoanNet (www.loan.net.com.au), its new Internet-based loan application system. The product enables users to apply for a loan, track the progress of the application, and receive advice on whether or not it has been approved. The process takes most users about 15 minutes, according to Liberty Financial officials. LoanNet account users are able to arrange repayments, vary amounts, query outstanding balances and conduct other transactions while online.

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NT gets online gaming

Northern Territory based Lasseters Casino has launched Lasseters Online (www.lasseters.com.au), the first Internet gaming site in Australia to be licensed and operational. The site is initially available to residents of the Northern Territory and international surfers. Availability of the gaming service to the rest of Australia depends on federal and state government approval through the regulation of online gaming, says Lasseters chief executive Peter Bridge. "The national model [for online gaming] is still being resolved, including implications for tax sharing and exclusivity. There are 137 million Internet users worldwide, so the main focus of our business is international."

It is unlikely online gaming will get an easy ride through state and federal governments, with community concerns about the dangers of online gaming being raised and the South Australian government forming a committee to possibly ban it. It is estimated that \$500 million is spent worldwide on Internet gaming annually on the more than 130 unregulated sties available, Lassetter's officials say.

Channel Ten turns it on

Free to air television broadcaster Channel Ten has officially launched its Web site at www.ten.com.au. Produced by Zivo (www.zivo.com.au), the site features message boards, an online program guide, competitions, trivia quizzes, electronic postcards and email services. Channel Ten is hoping to provide users with an interactive extension to their television viewing experience, according to Ten officials. "The launch of the Ten Web site provides the Network with another medium to inform and entertain its audience," says Network Ten CEO John McAlpine. "The site is aimed at Ten's core on-air audience of 16-39 year-olds."

Users can register at the site to have entertainment news, general news and sport and RPM motorsport previews emailed to them. Viewers can also have the current story lines of Ten's popular programs delivered by email fortnightly or weekly. ■

News compiled by Daniel Fallon (neted@netguide.aust.com)

Queensland buses

Queensland Transport's Transinfo service has gone online at www.transinfo.qld.gov.au. Visitors to the site will be able to access public transport information on train, bus and ferry services in South East Queensland.

Civic sells Web TV

Video rentals chain Civic Video (www.civicvideo.com.au) has launched its Web TV service. Users will be able to hire Civic Web TV by the night or by the week. This will increase the number of people with access to the Net, according to CivicVideo managing director Tony Aduckiewicz. "While many Australian households have a personal computer, more than 90% have a television." The cost of hiring the set top box, as well as the other hardware and software to connect to the Net, will be priced at \$30 for four nights with up to 15 hours of Internet connection. The service will initially be available in Civic Video's Darlinghurst and South Hurstville stores in Sydney, before rolling out nationwide throughout the year.

ISP news

Industry snubs plan

Strong opposition is continuing to come from Industry groups against the government's plans to control the Internet. The government wants to rate and possibly block porn sites, similar to the way films and videos are, using the Australian Broadcasting Authority (www.aba.gov.au) as a watchdog on the industry. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) would have to block sites deemed unfit for the community and overseas sites would be monitored as well.

Criticism has come from the Australian Internet Industry Association (www.aiia.com.au), anti-censorship group Electronic Frontiers Australia (www.efa.org.au) and even the government's own CSIRO (www.csiro.gov.au). The feasibility of the scheme is in question, according to AIIA executive director Peter Cornoneos. "Whilst the legislation is a courageous attempt at reflecting the position we've been developing over the last three years...Unfortunately there are no techni-

cally feasible steps available to ISPs to prevent users from accessing content that are 'commercially viable'."

OzEmail trials PC-Phone

Internet Service Provider OzEmail (www.ozemail.com.au) is trialing the OzEmail PC-Phone, a service that allows customers to use their personal computer to make low-cost telephone calls to any standard telephone in over 200 countries around the world. Using OzEmail Interline software, the PC-Phone application is integrated into the Windows desktop. PC-Phone calls are made by 'dialling' numbers on the PC-Phone screen, or by selecting a telephone number in the user's Microsoft Outlook Contacts list. The service is available for consumers with Microsoft NetMeeting and an OzEmail Phone account or pre-paid retail phone card. OzEmail Phone cards are sold through newsagents and Mobil Quix stores around the country. ■

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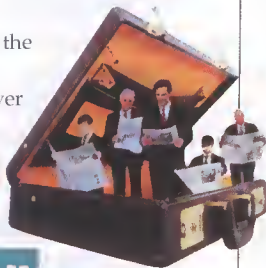
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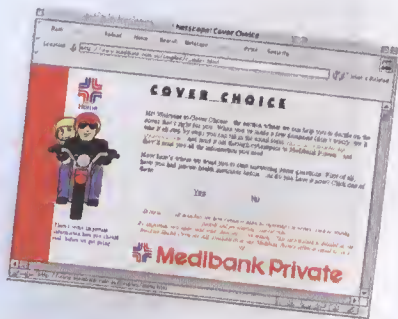


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Reviews

Logitech QuickCam VC



Available from Logitech [domino.logitech.com/](http://domino.logitech.com/logiship.nsf/Australia?OpenForm)

logiship.nsf/Australia?OpenForm

RRP \$199.95

LOGITECH ACQUIRED THE QUICKCAM range from Connectix last year buying a strong brand with a long pedigree. The first QuickCam devices were developed for Apple Macintosh computers, but they are now the most popular low-end devices in the Windows world as well.

Earlier QuickCam versions were designed to double as still cameras. The QuickCam VC is specifically intended for videoconferencing; hence the VC. Even so, it can double as a reasonable quality still camera grabbing a 24-bit depth image at 640 by 480 dpi resolution. The catch is that it has to be plugged into your PC.

Physically the QuickCam is a black spherical device with a lens in the front and a cable at the rear. Its size is somewhere between a golf ball and a cricket ball. It sits freely on a triangular stand that should give it infinite aiming flexibility. In practice the stiff rear cable tends to limit the aiming options. A seam lets you know if it is correctly oriented and the lens can be focused, though in practice this seems unnecessary. Instead of using its own microphone, the QuickCam software configured the PC's built-in microphone. How this works in practice depends on your existing system. In most cases it will be more than adequate as bandwidth restrictions limit sound quality anyway.

The test system plugs into your computer's parallel port, while a second cable connects to the keyboard port. Logitech has a USB version, which is

far simpler to connect, but will only work with computers purchased in the last year or so.

With everything plugged in and the software loaded, it took only seconds to get an onscreen picture. The software automatically adjusted the brightness. When used as a video camera, QuickCam operates at around 15 frames per second and has an image size of 320 by 240 pixels. It supports all standard formats and will work with just about any video conferencing software.

Overall results were nothing short of stunning given the price (it lists at \$199.95, but in practice you'll pay nearer \$150). Unless you have access to ISDN or have specialist needs, video camera buyers shouldn't go past the QuickCam VC.

Lotus Smart Suite



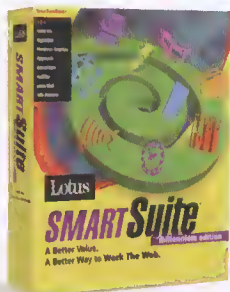
Available from Express Data www.expressdata.com.au

RRP \$727

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO WRITE about Lotus SmartSuite without referring to Microsoft Office. In theory they compete head-to-head. In practice, Office outsells SmartSuite by about ten-to-one.

This shows the power of Microsoft's strong brand and operating system advantage, because, while on a point-by-point comparison, SmartSuite almost matches Office, the Lotus package is more comprehensive. The two packages are substantially different in look, feel and approach; but are remarkably similar in terms of the results they can achieve.

Perhaps the most notable difference is SmartSuite's speech recognition. Microsoft says voice technology isn't ready, but when it will be, it will be integrated at the operating system level. Lotus, on the other hand, supplies a version of



IBM ViaVoice on a separate CD Rom. It adds speech recognition to the WordPro word processing application and the Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet.

On my 150MHz Pentium notebook, speech recognition worked — barely. It was much slower to dictate and less accurate than my newspaper office learnt touch-typing. In fact, I found it rarely got a single complete sentence correct — even after all the training sessions. Your experience may differ. Despite these problems, voice recognition is impressive and has huge potential.

While WordPro and 1-2-3 are broadly comparable to their Microsoft Office equivalents, the Ap-

proach database is much easier to master than the strictly-for-experts Microsoft Access. Freelance Graphics is positioned against PowerPoint, though it would rate as a second-best choice. On the other hand, Microsoft has nothing to compare with the excellent Lotus Organiser — Outlook has a different emphasis.

SmartSuite's SmartCenter does a better job of pulling components together than the Microsoft equivalent. On a sour note, the Lotus Mail software managed to disable my existing (Outlook) mail software — so take care if you decide to switch email clients. Undoing the damage was a major exercise. I found the SmartSuite Web publishing tools to be well integrated with the rest of the software, but lacking in power.

Ultimately, the decision to use SmartSuite depends on its ability to co-work with the dominant Office package. Apart from the email problem, I found few inconsistencies to worry about. If you want an alternative to the market leader, or you like the idea of speech recognition, then SmartSuite is a good choice. / **BILL BENNET**

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Shareware

MediaThumb 1.0b

Platform Win 95/98/NT **Price** Freeware

Site members.aol.com/bdeveza/mthumb.zip

MediaThumb is a media browser, graphics viewer and file manager for images, sounds and video. It makes dynamically re-sizable thumbnails of your image files and has tons of image editing features: format conversion, image manipulation including effects and colour manipulation. It also allows you to add keywords and categories to images, has a printing utility and supports drag & drop between applications. It's useful for the cataloging of CD-ROM images, allowing you to save thumbnails in albums and handles most image formats available on Windows. It's freeware at the moment and is totally integrated with Explorer making it possibly the best freeware media manager I've seen. Grab it quick.

CamSnap

Platform Win 95/98/NT **Price** Shareware US\$24.95

Site members.xoom.com/A_George/CamSnap/camsnap.exe

CamSnap is a useful little utility that allows you to use your video camera, through your capture card

to take snapshots. It stores the snaps so that you can edit to adjust brightness, colour and contrast. Supporting Direct Draw and sporting a user-friendly interface, CamSnap will be useful for anyone wanting to pull stills out of a video sequence. Up to fifty frames can be captured as a series and saved, allowing you to get that perfect shot.

DataCloak 4.3

Platform Win 95/98/NT **Price** US\$15.00

Site www.btinternet.com/~bennett/dc434.exe

Datacloak is an easy to use encryption tool for your files and emails. Using a code you input, files or whole directories can be encrypted making them safe from prying eyes. Clipboard encryption can be used for email data and full logging of all actions makes it easy to trace what you've been encrypting and any errors that have occurred.

DataCloak also handles secure deletes, making it impossible for anyone to reconstruct your deleted files. A great tool for the security conscious with sensitive files.

/ **BRUCE DAVIS-GOFF**



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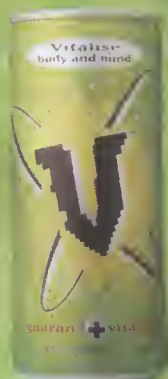
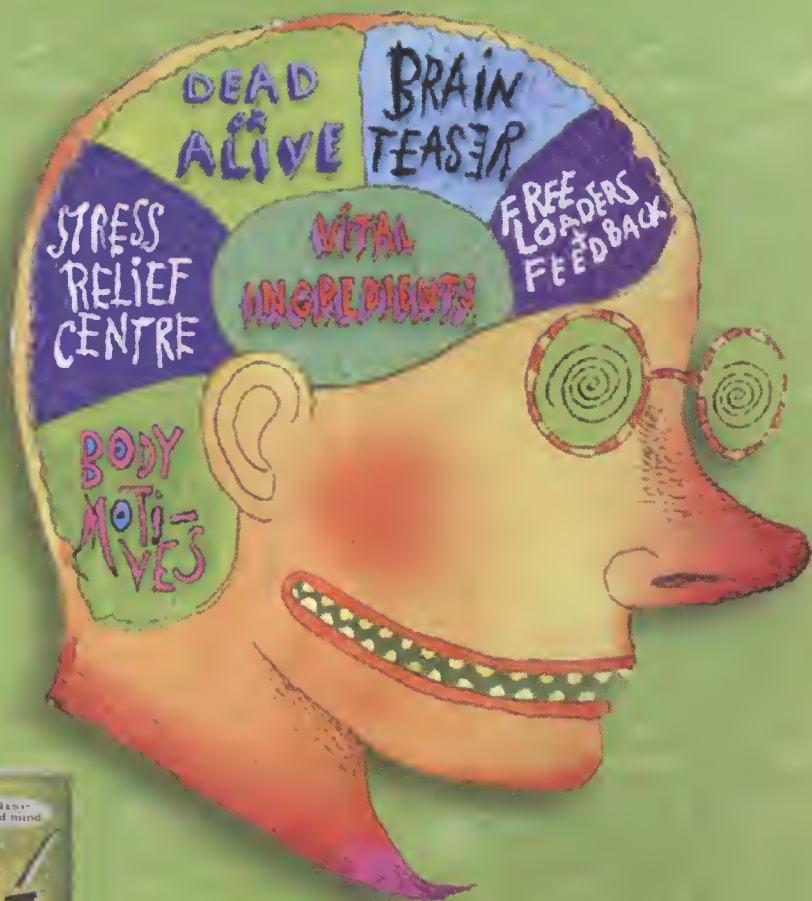
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as Daniel Fallon and
Matthew Buchanan
report



NOW

SCREENING



Film fans, or to be more specific, Internet-savvy film fans, are a particularly hard genre to please. They can never know too much, and won't be satisfied until every little detail has been

scrutinised, deconstructed, analysed and devoured. Take, for example, the release in mid-November by Lucasfilm of the official one-sheet poster for Episode I of Star Wars, subtitled "The Phantom Menace". Being the most highly-anticipated movie of all time, bar none, means you're subjected to an even more intense level of scrutiny than usual. True to form, fans of the Star Wars juggernaut immediately set to work discovering fault — the poster depicts the young Anakin Skywalker on a planet with two suns, but shows him with only one shadow. So much for artistic licence. This was just the beginning, however. Days later an individual known only as "Scorpio" videotaped the first screening of the Episode I trailer with a handheld camera, converted it to MPEG format and made it available to the online community via Harry Knowles' excellent Ain't It Cool News site (www.aint-it-cool-news.com). This action apparently prompted Lucasfilm to release a 20Mb official version of the trailer on its www.starwars.com site, even before it went on general release in US theatres, and copies of both versions proceeded to clock up an estimated 100,000 downloads during their first 24 hours online. The feeding frenzy was carefully monitored by Count Down, which provides a current list of download locations at its site (countingdown.com/starwars/).

All this commotion marks the culmination of several years' worth of speculation, rumour and insider opinion online regarding the 20-year-old franchise. Three major players — www.theforce.net, www.jedinet.com and Knowles' site —

have consistently attempted to outdo each other by being first with scoops involving everything from casting decisions to shooting locations. These sites represent the ultimate in film fandom — virtual communities where like-minded enthusiasts can bathe in the aura generated by their favourite masterpiece.

It's official

Perhaps more accessible due to the extensive campaigns which make them possible are the official sites which accompany most major blockbusters into the theatre. These are invariably big-budget, productions riddled with screensavers, games, desktop wallpaper, interviews, behind-the-scenes tours and photo galleries. What they lack in personality they often make up for in sheer grandeur — for studios footing multi-million dollar production and marketing budgets, US\$50,000 for a great-looking Web site is barely noticeable. To locate the site of your favourite film, you can generally guess its URL. For instance, animated classic *The King and I* (www.kingandl.com) was not hard to guess. However, this isn't always the case. Some URLs are shortened, others hyphenated and a few tied to their studio or hosting service, such as the site for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (www.foxsearchlight.com/midfinal/).

For a broad range of both official and unofficial fan sites, however, there's only one site you'll ever need — the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com). This is one of the most comprehensive resources on the Internet for any discipline.



It consists of a searchable directory of over 175,000 film and TV listings and over 590,000 individual cast and crew members, all fully cross-referenced. Using the IMDb you can look up a film, view its cast and credits lists, click through to complete filmographies for any of those people, view the film's trailer or find reviews and fan sites, trivia and goof lists, or soundtracks and DVDs for sale. The perfect resource for solving those "I'm sure he was/wasn't in that!" arguments.

In review

The latest film industry news and reviews can be sourced from any one of dozens of Web sites — the following are a few of the more worthy options. Mr Showbiz (www.mrshowbiz.com), part of America's ABCNews.com network, is an accessible and thorough magazine-style site covering US box office fare — check out in the feature section the new films opening in the States summer holiday season, and a reader's poll on who should have won this year's Emmy Awards. For a more discerning commentary, Salon Magazine's Entertainment section (www.salonmag.com/ent/) offers in-depth analysis of both the big and small screens. Or, for the terminally short of attention span, try TNT's Rough Cut (www.roughcut.com) for bite-sized film reviews, interviews and Tinseltown news. Still thirsting for more? Gas up at the sprawling E! Online (www.eonline.com), the "cheerfully smart-ass" MovieJuice (www.moviejuice.com) or the revamped Film.com (www.film.com), where you'll also find a huge preview of upcoming films.

Urban Cinefile (www.urbancinefile.com.au) is also a top stop. Winner of the Australian Internet Award for Best Arts and Entertainment Site, this offering is updated every Thursday with fresh reviews, news and film clips. The good thing about the way it

structures its reviews is that every movie gets more than just one film's critics overview — it typically gets three or four. Counts for positive and negative reviews are then tallied on the top left for surfers to view.

As well as reviews, industry gossip, box-office turnover facts, Imovie (www.imovie.com.au) is the ideal online destination when you want screening times at your local cinema. You can submit your own review of a movie you've seen at the site using an online form, or write in some with some gossip or trivia using forms too. Using the search facility you can search the entire database for movies, actors, gossip, news and user reviews. Imovie allows visitors to customise certain menu pages to show only the content they desire, once they've registered at the site. Similarly you can head off to Yahoo!s cinema guide (au.movies.yahoo.com/movies/), which draws on the resources of both Cinefile and Imovie to provide its own movie guide for surfers.

If you're still unsure about a film, head for the trusted opinions of Margaret Pomeranz and David Stratton of *The Movie Show* on SBS (www.sbs.com.au). You'll have to dig a little into the SBS site to find *The Movie Show* first. It features video clips of the movies under scrutiny using the Vivo multimedia player. You'll also find industry news and interviews with different directors, actors and other movie-makers of the moment.

For those who just want to sit back and take in some trailers, head for Big Pond's goldmine of film clips at www.entertainment.bigpond.com/movies_trailers.htm — there's everything from *Life is Beautiful* to *Thin Red Line*. Patience is a necessary virtue for those who are running lower bandwidth connections. Cinema lovers can also drop in on short film festival site Tropfest (www.tropfest.com.au) to check out this year's entries using a Windows multimedia player.

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drive.com.au

The Sydney Morning Herald



The Sun-Herald

From the horse's mouth

Many filmgoers prefer the advice of friends over professional reviewers, and with so many film lovers populating the Net, why not compare your favourites with theirs? Movie Critic (www.moviecritic.com), powered by LikeMinds technology, is a free service which allows you to rate a handful of films picked by the site at random, or chosen by you. Once you've given sufficient information, you can ask for the Movie Critic's suggestions of other films you may like, based on what others with similar tastes have chosen.

The online film industry is a tight-knit unit, and it's unlikely that, with your fingers on the pulse of the sites mentioned in this article, you'll ever miss a major film-related event on the Net. When new commercial sites launch, they'll usually advertise with other, more established sites, in order to boost traffic through their pages. Whether you want to see the mutant offspring of South Park and Star Wars (www.citysun.ac.uk/klawler/sp-toons/) or just want the latest on your favourite screen star (www.celebsite.com), keep an eye on the slightly smaller screen. ■

the chains

Village www.village.com.au

Hoyts www.hoyts.com.au/aust.html

Greater Union www.greaterunion.com.au

Dendy www.dendy.com.au

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www.miramax.com

www.movies.warnerbros.com

www.spe.sony.com/movies

www.paramount.com

www.foxmovies.com.au

Six of the best

Star Wars

www.starwars.com

Catch up with all the hype over the next generation of Star Wars movies here. Download trailers of the movie and use Quicktime to view them. Read up about how all your favourite characters, such as Obi-Wan Kenobi, Darth Vader, R2-D2 and Yoda, fit into the new series. This site is a great source of any related news and links. There's also an archive of images from the film, an interactive 3D guided tour of Anakin Skywalker's home (he later becomes Darth Vader) and an ongoing tutorial about how George Lucas and co. put together the movie.

★★★★

The Matrix

www.whatisthematrix.com

This film takes sci-fi to a new level, delivering stunts and special effects that are amazing. You'll get the idea from the trailer at this Flash enhanced site. The photo gallery gives you a piece of the action as well. Read up about the visual effects and behind-the-scenes work that put this movie together. You can download a Matrix Shockwave game (1.4 Mb) or a screen-saver too.

★★★★

The Mummy

www.themummy.com

Mix an age-old legend with today's ability to make outrageous science fiction films and you get another Hollywood blockbuster — or so they think. Read about the story of *The Mummy*, which is a remake of the 1932 film of the same title, find out about the cast and



characters (George of the Jungle is in it), download a Shockwave game and a screensaver or send a Mummy postcard. Not so rotten.

☆☆☆

Austin Powers 2

www.austinpowers.com

Austin Powers 2 – The Spy Who Shagged Me is a must see site for Austin Powers fans. Download the trailer to get a taste of the craziness, or click through to a site selling film gear – from groovy beach towels to way out wall posters. There's a heap of content up there from the first movie too, with a gallery of Liz Hurley and Cindy Margolis for the boys, and a diary of a Fembot (hmmm, weird). Find out more about Dr Evil or download some sixties psychedelic wallpaper. Yeah baby, yeah.

☆☆☆

The King and I

www.thekingandi.com

This musical classic is the next animated feature off the shelf aimed at keeping kids enter-

tained. Visitors can hear versions of the songs, read the lyrics and view scenes from the movie here as well. Meet the actors and the producers of the film here as well. You'll hear familiar tunes like *Getting to Know You*, using your Windows multimedia player. You can also read about the history and making of the animated classic at the site. Ignore the 'Coming March' sign – it will be released in Australia on June 17.

☆☆☆

A Midsummer Night's Dream

www.foxsearchlight.com/midfinal/

A fantastic Flash enhanced version puts the magic into this offering. Take a gander at the all star cast in this movie in the 'Fairy Garden' – everyone from Ally McBeal, uhum...I meant Calista Flockhart to Kevin Kline is in this one. Students of Shakespeare can download a study guide to this classic in Acrobat format. You can view the trailer in 'Theseus' Theater' or send a love postcard from 'Cupid's Chamber'. Check it out.

☆☆☆☆☆

COMING SOON COMPETITIONS TRAILERS MOVIE MAIL SCHOOL STUDY GUIDES NOW ON VIDEO

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Done Internet zone

The background of the entire page is a dense, vibrant field of multi-colored jelly beans in shades of yellow, orange, pink, purple, and green. Overlaid on this is a large, light-yellow, cloud-like shape that contains the main title. The title is written in a mix of fonts: 'the' is in a small, dark blue sans-serif font; 'sweetest' is in a larger, dark blue serif font; 'online' is in a red serif font; 'goodies' is in a very large, bold, red serif font; and 'revealed' is in a red serif font, slightly smaller than 'goodies'.

the sweetest online goodies revealed

Bruce Davis-Goff is a good person to take shopping. He hates paying for things. He spends his online hours hunting down software he can find free and for he it. He shares with us the 12 most exciting things you can download for little cost.

It's a horrible experience buying shrink wrapped software at a store then getting it home to find it's not what you wanted especially if the store has a no-returns policy. The Net offers

some great goodies that you can download. It's an ideal distribution model for software but it does pay to read the fine print. Although the trend is away from placing limits on shareware, most try to encourage you to pay something towards it.

Here are some tips:

Buy GetRight or Gozilla (download managers), a tiny investment that will save you hours, especially with large files.

✿ Schedule your downloads after midnight but not too late or Americans will be out of bed and clogging the Net.

✿ If you like a program and keep it, do pay for it even if it means getting a money order. The whole Net depends on the innovation of independent software producers so they deserve their token payment.

✿ Unless you have unlimited storage and an Internet flat rate account, be discriminating. There's brilliant shareware to be had once you sort through the mountain out there. To give you an idea, I discard four programs out of five, even though they sounded good at the time.

✿ Some shareware requires additional files to run. For example, anything written in Visual Basic needs the associated run-time files. Check it out before downloading and avoid those "Can't find

xxxx.xx windows when you try and run it." As a rule of thumb it pays to visit the author's site before downloading to check for these things.

the top 12 Goodies:

ICQ

What it is: Communication tool

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Shareware

Size: 1.61Mb

Site: <ftp://ftp.download.com/pub/wing5/internet/icq98a130.exe>

Surfing the Internet can be a solitary experience — sure, you're friends may be online somewhere, but how would you contact them right this minute? With ICQ you can and more.

When you register ICQ you're assigned a unique number. You give this out to friends and collect theirs in a contact list. This is updated when you log on, showing the status of all your global buddies and notifying them about you.

It has real time chat, file transfer, email notification and lets you call external programs like NetMeeting as well as online games. It's packed with features, including ones to protect your privacy. It fixed a glaring gap in Internet communication and thus has been a big hit.

SHAREWARE

Microsoft NetMeeting

What it is: Videoconferencing Client

Freeware Size: 2.06Mb

Site: www.microsoft.com/msdownload/iebuild/netmeet2/en/netmeet2.htm

Sci-Fi movies often feature videophones and while the bandwidth for smooth, hi-res, full-screen video hasn't arrived, PC videophones have.

Some form of camera, sound and video capture card will get you the full monty, with at least a 28.8k connection. Video and audio only work on a one-to-one basis, but using the included chat and whiteboard, group conferences can be held, files transferred and general hilarity pursued.

Being such new technology, it's still dominated by novelty value and peopled by early adopters, but it's easy to see NetMeeting as the phone system of the future. It's by no means trouble free, but runs circles around competing products, CuSeeMe and VDOPhone, in part due to the huge user base but mostly because it's feature rich, easy to use and free.

Winamp

What it is: Music player

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT Shareware US\$10.00

Size: 476Kb

Site: mainframe.gameaxis.com/winamp/winamp209.exe

If you haven't heard of MP3s yet, you're missing out on a musical treat. This highly compressed form of audio is sending shockwaves through the music industry and Winamp is the premier player of this format.

It not only plays MP3s but almost every other audio format with the help of extensive plug in support. You name it – customisable playlists, graphic equalisation, pitch control, lyric display, connection to online CD track listing databases (CDDb)

and thousands of "skins" (alternative interfaces). Winamp was the first and remains the defacto standard for MP3 decoders.

Purists will tell you that every other MP3 player has been "pirated" from Winamp. Ha! The irony.

Winzip

What it is: A file compression / decompressor

Shareware: US\$29.00

Site: [ftp://ftp.download.com/pub/winnt/utilities/winzip70.exe](http://ftp.download.com/pub/winnt/utilities/winzip70.exe)

Just as VHS became the standard for home video, Zip has become the standard compression format for the Internet. Most files can be compressed significantly for faster transfer and decreased storage requirements. Winzip has always been in front. It now enjoys a massive user base and is up to version seven, which now offers support for Microsoft's CAB format.

It's drag and drop interface makes compression / decompression a simple task and nobody can live without it. Nuff said.

GetRight

What it is: File download manager

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Shareware: \$17.50

Size: 1.25Mb

Site: flint.tucows.com/files/getrt333.exe

If you have ever been disconnected from the Net in the middle of a huge file download and had to start all over again, it's painful. GetRight remedies this by managing your downloads for you, from finding the fastest server to resuming after disconnection.

It's a scheduler too, dialing your modem, downloading, hanging up when finished and shutting down your computer. Once running it works



automatically from the task bar, leaping into action when you click on a download URL and maintaining a database of files already retrieved. For the hard core surfer and novice alike, it makes downloading a breeze.

Opera

What it is: Web browser

Platform: Windows 3.1/Windows 95/98/NT

Unlimited shareware: \$US35.00

Size: 1.2Mb

Site: opera.nta.no/0351e32.exe

"Bloatware" is the term for programs too big for their own good and both mainstream browsers fit this category well. Wait, what's this — a skinny little browser that flattens them both? Opera is small, fast and renders pages accurately, making it an ideal reference browser for Web designers. Functions can be limited too, making it good for administrators. It's got mail and news clients built in, full keyboard navigation for those with disabilities, intelligent browser-window management and full plug-in support. Zippedydodah.

A low fat alternative to the beer belly boys of browsing.

Web Ferret

What it is: Search engine manager

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Shareware

Size: 725Kb

Site: ftp.zdnet.nis.newscorp.com/pub/private/sWLIB/internet/web_browsers/wferet.zip

With the sheer number of search options available online, it's hard to pick one for all seasons. I thought Web Crawler was it, then I found Web Ferret. Two years later, I still use it for one simple reason — it always gets results.

Web Ferret searches Alta Vista, AOL Netfind, EuroSeek, Excite, InfoSeek, LookSmart, Search.Com, Lycos and Yahoo concurrently, returning a saveable list with duplicates removed. This smaller version is free, with its big brother, Web Ferret Pro, searching even more engines. But the little Ferret does the business, setting itself up as a Find item on the start menu and providing fast and unobtrusive searching with just a few clicks.

Paint Shop Pro 5

What it is: Graphic design/ image manipulation

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Shareware: \$US99.00

Size: 6.93Mb

Site: [ftp://ftp.simtel.net/pub/simtelnet/win95/graphics/psp501ev.zip](http://ftp.simtel.net/pub/simtelnet/win95/graphics/psp501ev.zip)

One of the top five downloads of all time, and with good reason. It's a painting and graphic manipulation program that's only a few steps short of top shelf stuff such as Adobe Photoshop. Filters and effects galore are included along with Web graphic and animation functions. Version five supports layers, Photoshop plug-ins, custom brushes and twain support for scanning. It's pseudo-Photoshop, at a fraction of the price, with all the bells and whistles.

mIRC

What it is: Internet Relay Chat

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Shareware: \$US20.00

Site: www.uq.net.au/~zzhgolde/mirc55t.exe

Size: 952Kb

With Internet phones and videoconferencing become hot, it's easy to overlook IRC or Internet Relay Chat. IRC is a text-based system that runs in parallel with the Web, a meeting place for millions of people in almost as many chat rooms.



mIRC quite rightly assumes the mantle of king chat client. It's the efforts of one programmer (loud cheer for Khaled Mardam-Bey). It's not a major challenge to use, while still having depths of complexity the more experienced chatter will enjoy.

McAfee Virus Scan

What it is: A virus scan

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Shareware: \$US49.95

Size: 8.31Mb

Site: download.mcafee.com/eval/user-registration.asp

McAfee Virus Scan has monthly updates of all the current nasties.

CuteFtp

What it is: Ftp client

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Shareware: US\$34.95

Size: 1.23Mb

Site: [ftp://ftp.cuteftp.com/pub/cuteftp/cute2832.exe](http://ftp.cuteftp.com/pub/cuteftp/cute2832.exe)

In this mad rush to download, spare a thought for the "uploaders" — patient people, perhaps with slow upstream connections, attempting to fill the larder shelves of the Internet where you plan to stuff yourself. Anything that makes uploading and maintaining a site easier has always been in demand and who can resist a cutie?

CuteFtp is the GetRight for uploaders, automatically connecting and disconnecting, doing file comparisons, even uploading complete directory tree structures. A macro function allows for automatic playback of uploads for regular routines and remote file editing makes it even easier. Add in "resume after disconnection", site management

tools and a cute interface and you'll wonder why you ever thought FTP was tricky.

Free Agent

What it is: A newsgroup reader client

Platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Freeware

Size: 1.0Mb

Site: [ftp://ftp.ping.at/pub/pc/internet/Windows95/News/fa32-111.exe](http://ftp.ping.at/pub/pc/internet/Windows95/News/fa32-111.exe)

Newsgroups are still a forgotten treasure on the Net, unfairly maligned as hot beds of freely available sexually deviancy but actually the most amazing forum ever convened. The wealth of information and ever expanding threads of discussion can be a mission to navigate and that's where Free Agent comes in.

Once again it's the smaller freeware relation of a bigger and flashier shareware version, though completely functional with more than enough grunt for your average user. It's feature rich, multi-pane interface makes browsing and subscribing to newsgroups very easy with binary extraction a click or two. ■

what's whereware

Demoware — Usually larger professional programs that have specific functions removed, (ie saving, printing). Basically a trial version you discard when you buy the real thing.

Crippleware — Almost the whole program but with bits crippled (they don't work) until you register.

Shareware — Fully functioning programs, most often with a time limit after which they may cease to function or turn into Nagware.

Freeware — Free with no strings attached.

Nagware — Any of the above but with pop up windows telling you to register and pay up.



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Normal telecommunication charges apply. Valid credit card required. Trial hours available to new subscribers only for use in the first month of membership. Unused hours are not rolled over into the following month. ISDN access and Rural Connect access not included. PURE CREATIVE TBPHS200

LOOK WHO'S TALKING



Feeling the pinch?
Michael Skeggs
and Daniel Fallon
explain how you can save
great wods of cash
using Internet Telephony

Everyone with friends and family interstate or overseas dreads the phone bill, and even with the plethora of alternative phone companies that have sprung up in the last few

years, the cost of calls can still mount up. When the first Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) products emerged a few years ago it came as no surprise that users flocked to them in an attempt to cut down or completely avoid traditional telephony costs.

Unfortunately, for many of those early adopters, the reality didn't measure up to the promise. Early systems were plagued with quality problems and were often difficult to use and set up.

Some of those early systems have fallen by the wayside, while others have matured, so we're taking another look at how Internet telephony stacks up.

How does it work.

VoIP is a system which takes a normal voice telephone call and transmits it across a digital packet network, like the Internet, rather than using traditional switched networks.

The idea behind VoIP isn't new. For many years different suppliers have been taking advantage of digital technologies to cram more information onto standard telephone links. With a standard switched digital telephone system, as used in the bulk of Australia's telephone network, each call is allocated a 64Kbps circuit between the caller and the receiver. This means that for the duration of the call, all sound collected by both parties' handsets is transmitted to the other using the same bandwidth, whether the parties are talking or remaining silent.

Engineers realised this was an inefficient use of resources, and that if the information making up the call was compressed, more information could be packed into the gaps inherent in ordinary con-

versations, and less bandwidth would be required. Further compression techniques could allow even more information to be packed in if users were prepared to accept a small decrease in call clarity.

Different systems use different levels of compression, but a typical compression system can reduce the amount of data transmitted to less than a fifth of that required for a standard call. All this means that the cost of supplying a call drops dramatically, and those savings can be passed on to the end user.

question of quality

The trade off for this ability to fit more calls into existing bandwidth is a decrease in call quality. This can vary depending on a range of factors, including the degree of compression in the system and the amount of other traffic on the network. With the traditional switched system, the quality of calls seldom varies. With VoIP, however, if the network has insufficient bandwidth at any point, users will hear delays and may find that their call "breaks up" intermittently during a call.

Phone to phone

The two major players in the Australian VoIP marketplace, at least as far as international calls are concerned, are OzEmail (www.ozemail.com.au) and Telstra (www.telstra.com.au). OzEmail runs an international network of affiliated Internet Service Providers that provide VoIP services between their markets using software developed in Australia. Telstra has recently

NET TELEPHONY

finished a trial of VoIP between Sydney and London, using software developed in the United States and Australia.

In each case, users place calls through standard telephone handsets, which then use the Internet to carry traffic to its destination. The data goes from the telephone line through the local telephone network to a local server, and is compressed before heading through the Internet to a server at near the target location, which puts it through the local telephone network to a handset at the other end.

With both of these systems integration with current phone systems is considerable, and a user has no exposure to Internet technologies, just the familiar telephone keypad.

PC to PC

Other systems, such as Vocaltec's Internet Phone software (www.vocaltec.com) run on a user's computer, which is then connected to the Internet using a standard modem connection.

The chief advantage of a PC based VoIP system is that there are few additional costs to your standard ISP fee. In the case of Internet Phone, or competing products such as Microsoft's Netmeeting (www.microsoft.com), if the person you are calling is online, then there are no call costs besides the standard ISP charges. Even using an ISP charging \$5 per hour, this works out at less than 9c per minute, a fraction of the cost of traditional international calls. If you use an ISP offering cheaper or unlimited rates it works out cheaper still, although beware that if your ISP charges for data downloads, using VoIP can download more than 5 Mb of data an hour when making a call.

The disadvantage of these software based systems is the requirement for the person you are calling to be online. Many regular users make use of

instant messaging applications such as ICQ (www.icq.com) to determine when their friends are online to setup a call.

If you are online a lot, and the people you are calling are too, these PC based products are a great way to cut down on call costs, particularly if you like to chat for a long time, but they still fall a long way short of the convenience and ease of use of a traditional telephone service.

PC to phone

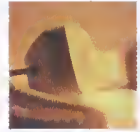
Vocaltec and Net2phone (www.net2phone.com) are making some advances in this area with the introduction of gateways to the traditional telephone network. These work by allowing you to initiate a call from your PC or Mac online, but instead of the person you are calling using a computer to receive it, the gateway nearest to them places a call on the local phone network. This means that the person you are calling never need know that you are using the Internet instead of a normal telephone, and is ideal when you want to call somebody who is not online or does not have access to a computer.

The drawback of this system is that to avoid toll charges at the terminating end of the call, the person you are calling must live locally to a gateway, and at this stage that means only in selected areas. The other drawback is the requirement to setup an account with the company who runs the gateway to pay for the outbound terminating calls.

Even with these caveats, it offers the potential to offer good savings.

Two hitches

There are two drawbacks to the PC based Internet telephony packages that are common to all of these systems. Firstly, it is important that you have a "full-duplex" sound card. This allows the use of the micro-



phone and speakers at the same time, allowing both you and the person you are calling to speak (and be heard) at the same time. The alternative, with a half duplex card, is a conversation reminiscent of a CB radio, with each party having to wait until the other stops speaking to get a word in. Most of the better quality sound cards available today are full-duplex, but if you own one of the older type, bear in mind the cost of a replacement if you think you might be using your PC to place calls a lot.

The second drawback is one that you face every day on the Internet, a lack of bandwidth. If your ISP doesn't have enough bandwidth available for customers to maintain a reasonably high regular throughput (over 1.5 Kbps) you will find that your calls break up and suffer in sound quality.

The big players

OzEmail and Telstra's products take a different approach to capitalising on the savings of using VoIP. With OzEmail, for example, you first place a call to a local number, key in a personal identification number, then dial your destination number.

OzEmail offers two options for customers, an account which is debited to the credit card monthly in a similar way to their ISP charges, or prepaid phone cards which expire when you have used the credit they carry. In both cases the per minute costs to use the service are cheaper than competitive phone companies, but are considerably higher than ISP rates, making the system a more expensive alternative than setting up your PC for Internet calls. The OzEmail system offers good call quality, approximately the same as with a mobile phone.

Telstra recently concluded a pilot of its own VoIP solution for 350 Sydney customers placing calls to London. The Telstra system is intended to integrate tightly with their existing telephone network, becoming part of Telstra's complete service package.

Geoff Benson, manager of Internet Enablers says the service is set to launch in the second half of 1999, following further product and marketing enhancements.

Depending on the results of final market research, the service may be billed to customers existing accounts, using prepaid phone cards, or to a credit card.

Where can you find your dream job?

NET TELEPHONY

PRODUCT	NETMEETING	INTERNET PHONE	COOL ALK
Developer	LogiCam, Inc.	Internet Phone, Inc.	NetScape Communications Corp.
Requirements	Win 95 or later 12Mb RAM	Win 95 or later 16Mb Pentium or Mac 68040	Windows 3.1 or later, Mac or Unix
Platform(s)	Windows	Windows, Mac OS, Unix	Windows
Software Cost	Free	\$US49.95	Free
Hardware	Internet connection Web camera	Internet connection Soundcard (optional) Fax modem	Internet connection Fax modem
Stand out Features	Tight integration with other Mac applications Good video support	Flexible phone PC calling Video, white board and chat support	Great multiplatform support Answering machine features
Website	www.logicam.com	www.internetphone.com	www.netscape.com

It is expected that pricing will be cheaper than Telstra's standard call rates, but again, not as cheap as using a PC based solution.

A bright future

While in the increasingly competitive VoIP market, services such as these offer cheaper rates than traditional telephone services, it is at the cost of convenience or call quality. In the future, quality will be less of an issue and Internet telephony will be integrated more closely into your current telephone system, according to OzEmail's Crosbie. "The biggest hurdle we face at the moment is provisioning enough bandwidth to cope with growth."

The other hurdle Internet telephony faces is from incumbent telecommunications companies

and existing regulations, Crosbie says. "Telecom companies and the regulatory bodies have very limited knowledge about how voice over IP works. Often regulators will be unsure how or if VoIP fits into their regulatory framework."

Regardless of the outcome of such issues, Internet telephony is a service available today that can allow users to take advantage of considerable savings to the cost of making voice calls, particularly to overseas destinations. If you have a good ISP and the appropriate soundcard, it is definitely worthwhile to try out one of the client software packages for making Internet calls, and if you want to save money on calls you make from a normal phone too, OzEmail's service, and the forthcoming Telstra product will let you do that too. ■



NET2PHONE	DIGIPHONE	OZEMAIL PHONE	WEBPHONE
<p>Win 3.1 or later, 486DX, 8Mb</p> <p>Free</p> <p>Worldwide phone network access</p> <p>Free software</p>	<p>Win 3.1 or 95, 486DX, 8Mb RAM or Mac 68030 33MHz, 4Mb</p> <p>Free trial or prepaid card</p> <p>Low end system requirements</p> <p>Voice traffic is encrypted</p>	<p>Standard Telephone</p> <p>Free account set-up for home version</p> <p>Call anywhere</p> <p>Easy to use</p>	<p>Win 95 or later, Pentium 120MHz, 16Mb RAM</p> <p>Free trial, \$US19.95</p> <p>Support to multiple lines</p> <p>Call transfer support</p>

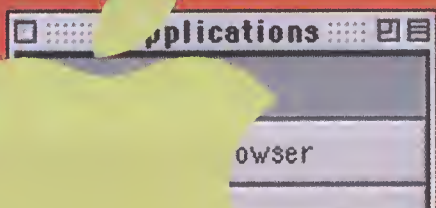
NOTE: The Internet Group (www.ihug.com.au) and MedioRing (www.medioring.co.uk) plan to launch Internet telephony services in the coming months.



ANZWERS
SEARCH CENTRE

jobsearch

www.anzwers.com.au/jobs



Mac OS HD



My printer



the Internet



44 items

Name

Make mine Macintosh

Appl



Town Hall Control



AppleLink/X.25



ASR Connection

Been to planet Mac recently?
Bill Bennett investigates
Macs and other
fine operating systems.

s and player in...
/ (Size 2... 8 Jul 1998



Trash



Internet aliases

2 items, 1 GB available



Network

444 items

Name



Apple E-Mail



E-Mail Software Server



Postal

Apple's current revival at the hands of street-smart interim CEO and Apple pioneer Steve Jobs, combined with feisty marketing and the appealing fruit-flavoured iMac computers is

no flash in the pan. The once-trendy computer maker is back, but what's online life like on planet Mac?

Looking back

The years have not been kind to Mac users. When Apple launched its revolutionary mouse and icon computer in the early 1980s, it was ten years ahead of competitors. It was an elegant, powerful, but expensive computer for people who had better things to do than learn obscure commands. It particularly appealed to creative people.

At the same time, Apple's engineers were the industry's best. They set the PC agenda and defined the shape of all today's machines. Thanks to Microsoft Windows and the combined research and development efforts of well over 500 companies, by the mid-1990s the competition had all but caught up. Actually, that's only half the story. A succession of second-rate CEOs and some plainly daft management strategies helped Apple lose its leadership position. Today, other computers can do everything the Mac can. Some can do more. Apple no longer has a technical advantage over its competitors. The most talked about feature of today's iMac is its bright colour – pretty, yes, but not much of a technical differentiator. However, Mac owners believe their machines still work better than Windows-based hardware and they like to point to that intangible 'feel' factor.

The Mac feeling

This 'feel' factor is not an illusion. Because Apple designed the hardware and the operating system

(OS), the Macintosh is a 'whole computer' in a way Windows machines can never be. A typical Windows PC uses Intel hardware, which is backwardly compatible with every other Intel system since the year dot. Even now, Windows is really a graphic user interface shell overlaid on top of an operating system, which in turn lies on top of the BIOS (Basic Input Output System), hard-coded software that controls the hardware. On the other hand, the Macintosh design is fully integrated, top to bottom.

This means, in theory anyway, the Macintosh is more reliable than a Windows machine and operates more smoothly. These points are debatable, though my 16 years experience of using both systems says that Macs crash less.

Macs also work more intuitively. However, the really important thing about the Macintosh architecture is that the operating system imposes less of an overhead on the hardware. Megahertz for megahertz, a Mac processes more efficiently than a Windows machine. Which is a technical way of explaining why Macs appear to run faster than same generation (or equivalently-priced) Windows machines.

Ah...the Internet

This brings us to the Internet. While one could argue for hours about the relative performance of a Mac running Microsoft Office compared to a Windows machine running the same software, debates concerning Internet performance are less contentious. Many independent observers

ALTERNATIVE OS

confirm what Macintosh owners already know, you'll get a better surfing experience from a Macintosh than from a Windows machine.

The reason lies in that integration. Running sound or vision is easier when there's only one sound or video technology implemented in the hardware. Macintosh hardware is better suited to rendering HTML pages and showing graphics. Some Mac owners swear their machines work better with modems than PCs do. Again this is debateable. However, the Mac copes better with vast quantities of data coming down the pipe.

Apple recognised the importance of the Internet long before Microsoft. While Bill Gates and his team were pushing MSN, Apple was delivering hardware to Web designers. Even now, when Apple only accounts for about 5% or so of computers shipped each year, it has a healthy slice of the design market.

Perhaps this is why Apple developed the iMac as the ultimate Web terminal. Recently dealers in Sydney were offering iMacs for less than \$2,000. If you are focused primarily on the Web, you'll be hard pressed to find a better bargain.

Before the iMac, being a Mac owner could be depressing, especially online. Mac dealerships had been closing down to the point where it was becoming hard to shop for software and accessories — my local dealer disappeared without trace. Thank heavens for online shopping!

There are some 10,000 pieces of software for the Mac — most are shareware. This looks good, until you realise there are some 90,000

programs for Intel-based machines. What's more, developers no longer deliver Mac versions of their programs ahead of Windows versions. It can be hard discovering you are no longer important.

However, over the years and months leading up to Christmas 1998, belonging to the Macintosh community was like living in an outback town. First one bank closes, then the other. Before long they've all gone. Then the high school closes. Then the gas station. And so on. Will the last person please switch off the lights?

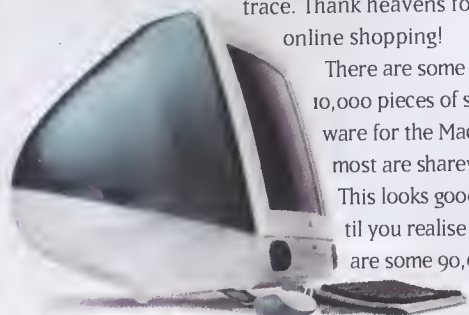
First the specialist Macintosh magazines merged. Then the weeklies closed. Dealers switched brands. Favourite Web sites shut down. Remaining sites became shriller, while the remaining Mac owners became more fanatical. It looked like it was only a matter of time before the game was over and the Macintosh a happy memory.

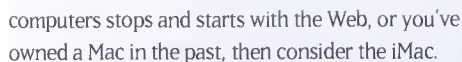
Thankfully, the iMac has breathed a great deal of life back into the community. The latest version of the operating system, Apple System 8.5 arrived with its cool Sherlock Internet search facility. Microsoft (of all people!) rode to the rescue with a new version of Office, its Internet Explorer browser and a capital investment in the company. New notebooks are promised. It all looks very positive again.

Of course, the new Mac community is not the same as the old one. It's no longer an exclusive club for right-brain creative types. Nor is it quite as cutting edge for graphics and design. The online community is less artistic and consumerier than before. Perhaps, it is better as things are less precious.

The road ahead

It's not easy running a Macintosh, but it can be very rewarding. If you are more interested in what you can do with a computer than the mechanics of doing it, then you might prefer a Mac. If you're interest in





While Macintosh System 8.5 is the main alternative to Windows, it's not likely to appeal to everyone. For a start, it only runs on Apple hardware. Not all of us can afford to buy another machine just to change the OS.

Happily there are alternatives that don't require new hardware. Here's a round up of the universe beyond Windows and Macintosh:

US\$49

Be is one of the most advanced operating system available, it's lean, mean and very fast. Versions are available for PowerPC and Intel systems.

What's more, it's optimised to handle multimedia and very large file sizes. It was the first PC OS to handle true multitasking. BeOs looks good on screen and, once you've mastered its idiosyncrasies, is easy to use. There's also a wealth of BeOs applications available. Fans, mainly heavy-duty geeks, say it's the best OS for heavy Internet use.

On the downside, BeOS doesn't sit comfortably on a notebook and might not have all the drivers you need for your existing hardware. It's not a difficult operating system to use, but you might find yourself out on a limb with BeOs.

Sometimes free, or \$49.95 with support

Despite the hype, Linux remains a geeky alternative to Windows or Macintosh. It's essentially Unix wrapped in a PC package. Unlike most versions of Unix, Linux is relatively easy to install and get running.

Macintosh Essential Sites:

Mac gamers should bookmark this site.

A portal for Mac users.

Also Try:

ALTERNATIVE OS



And unlike any version of Windows, Linux is a rock solid operating system that won't fall over.

Many people use Linux as their PC operating system, but really it works better as a server OS. It does everything Windows NT can do but on cheaper hardware and at a fraction of the cost. Most software is free to download, but users must pay for the support they get for the products.

The bad news is that Linux is daunting to use, particularly for people who've grown up with Windows or the Mac. It is possible to download a graphical user interface to run over Linux, but for many functions you'll need to master typing in text commands.

OS/2 Warp 4 www.software.ibm.com/os/warp/warp-client/

Complex pricing, expect to pay around \$260.

Originally sold as the OS that delivers better Windows than Windows and better DOS than DOS, IBM's OS/2 is a robust, mature alternative. If a program crashes, you don't have to reboot the OS. That's because the individual programs are protected from each other. Like Linux, it has a hardcore following of people who live in a shareware community. There are server and desktop versions, both have a fanatical following and a decent supply of quality applications. OS/2 users like to speak to their computers — the OS has built in voice support. Although there have been rumours the OS is about to be shelved, it's still available.

Amiga 3.5 www.amiga.com

Commodore's games and multimedia computer lives on as subsidiary of Gateway. The company plans to release new hardware later this year. It's similar to Mac in that the is integrated into the hardware. Plenty of people still enjoy the gaming action that this enables, but you won't find new software or standard ap-

plications. Not an ideal machine/OS for your Internet experience, mainly because you don't have access to all the Windows or Mac based applications.

Acorn RiscOS 4 www.acorn.com/acorn/

Once a mainstay of school computing, Acorn and its RiscOS operating system are a little thin on the ground these days. You can pick up machines running this OS for next to nothing. However, there's confusion over the different operating systems across the Acorn product range — BBC, Micro, Achamedies, Unix — which makes life hard. ●

other options

FreeBSD www.freebsd.org

Another free Unix with a different command set and licensing arrangements to Linux, but a worthwhile alternative.

JavaOS www.javasoft.com

This OS will run on handhelds, mobile phones and 'appliances' giving Web access etc.

FreeDos www.freedos.org

A free non-Microsoft, MS-DOS compatible system that works on just about any Intel-based system.

>> What is an operating system (OS)?

Commonly known as the platform, the OS is the programming your computer runs on. It controls your system's memory, files and the input/output devices (e.g. keyboard or monitor) your computer communicates with.



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per hour; v) unused hours don't carry forward to the next month; vi) max. session length may apply; vii) conditions apply. OAD3262



filter YOUR

Sending email is still the most popular reason people love the Web. It's changed the way we communicate. It's instant and because of this it demands instant responses. Louise Richardson shows you how to use your email software more efficiently

Mailer

WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW to filter messages in individual mailboxes (or the trash if you don't want to hear from someone) and how to set up an automatic response to let people know if you won't be checking your mail for long periods.

We look at two email programs — the latest version of Eudora Pro and Outlook 98. Most email software has filtering and automated response options — check the manuals or help files if you get stuck.

Eudora

If you receive a lot of email you may find your inbox gets pretty busy and the list of emails gets longer and longer. One way to make these easier to keep track of is to set up individual mailboxes for people you regularly get email from and automatically filter email into those mailboxes.

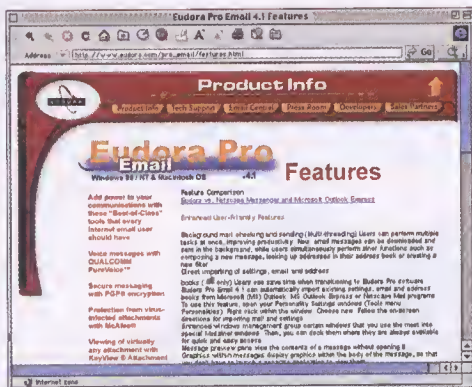
Most of you will be familiar with the "inbox" concept. Extra mailboxes can be created and will work

just like the "inbox". For example, you could create a mailbox called "Jenny" and filter all emails from Jenny in that mailbox.

In Eudora (www.eudora.com) create a new mailbox by selecting "mailbox" from the menu bar and then "new". You will be prompted to enter a name for this mailbox — do this and click "OK". There is also an option to make it a folder. Folders allow you to group mailboxes — you could create a folder for the mailboxes of each of your family members, another for work colleagues and another for friends.

Creating a filter for your new mailbox is easy. Select "tools" from the menu bar, then choose "filters". The white panel that appears to the left of the screen lists existing filters. Click on the "new" button. Eudora gives you many options on how to filter emails — you can choose to filter incoming email, outgoing email or to filter messages manually. Drop down boxes allow you to select criteria for filtering.

EMAIL FILTERING



For example, you can set Eudora to filter incoming email from "louise@netguide.aust.com". The important part is the bottom right of the screen. The "action" section tells Eudora what to do with the email that meets the criteria. You can request that it makes a different sound, automatically prints the email, forwards it to another email account and/or transfers it to another mailbox.

Select the "transfer to" option on one of the action drop down menus, then click the rectangular button that appears to the right of the menu. This will allow you to choose the mailbox to transfer these emails to or create a new mailbox.

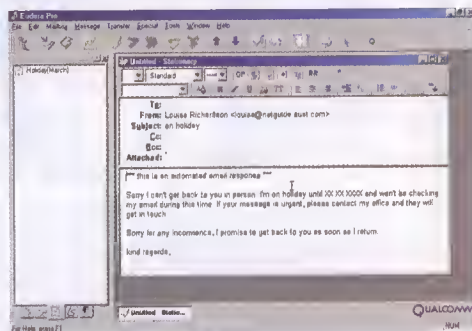
Another way to create filters in Eudora is to highlight messages in your inbox and click the right mouse button (Mac users click and hold). One of the options is "make filter".

Choose this and you can select a mailbox to filter messages to or create a new mailbox.

Automatic email responses are also simple in Eudora, and the filter system is used to send them. First you need to create some "stationery". This is a pre-composed email that will be automatically sent. A tip for those new to this – it pays to make it clear that you're sending an automated

response and explain why you're not writing back yourself. Automated responses tend to be very impersonal so make it very clear that you'll get back "in person" when you can.

Once again select "tools" from the menu bar and choose "stationery" from the list. This will open a blank window on the left of your screen. Right click in this window and select "new".



Once you've composed your message close the email window and you will be prompted to save your new stationery. Now go back to the filters and set up a filter for incoming mail, sent to your email address and choose the "reply with" action. This will allow you to choose from the stationery messages you have saved. You can set automated responses for different people so that your friends and family are sent your contact details, but work-related emails are told politely to go away until your holiday is over.

Outlook98

Creating new mailboxes in Outlook98 (www.microsoft.com/outlook/) is easy, but creating the filters to go with them tends to be a little more complicated. The jargon is different. In Outlook98 mailboxes are called "folders" and filters are called "rules".

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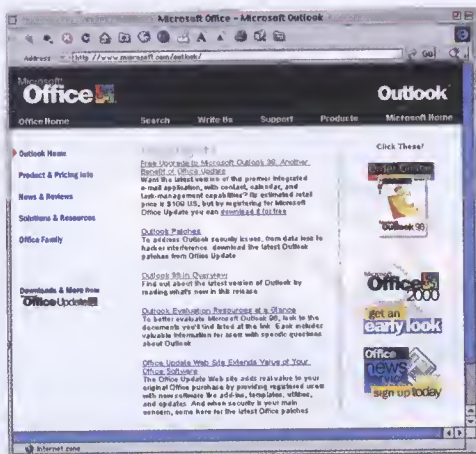
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EMAIL FILTERING



To create a new folder choose "file" from the menu bar and select "new". Choose the "new folder" option. Outlook will ask for a name for the new folder and where you would like to place it. I tend to list folders under the "inbox", which keeps mail files separated from other Outlook features like contacts and calendars.

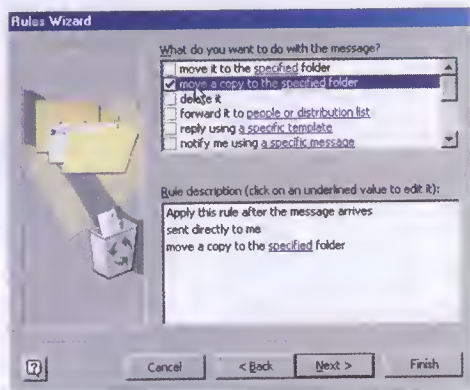
Once created it will appear in the Outlook folder list. To see this list choose "view" from the menu bar and select "folder list".

Fortunately Microsoft has created a Wizard to take some of the pain out of creating filters — not all of the pain, mind you. Select "tools" from the menu bar and choose "rules wizard" from the options. Click on "new" in the pop-up box and follow the instructions. Outlook creates a sentence in the lower panel describing the rule you create.

To move email messages to a special mailbox you're aiming to create a rule that says:

"Apply this rule after the message arrives with specific words in senders address move it to the specified folder."

There are many options and it may take some trial and error to automate the filters, but the system is efficient once you've set it up. There are many options for filtering so look through the list to see which suits your requirements best.



The rules wizard will also let you set up automated responses, but first you need to create a response message. Create a new mail message and type your message into the subject and body. Select "file" from the menu bar and "save as". You need to save your file as an Outlook Template (.oft) — make sure you save it somewhere that's easy to find.

The sentence you need to create using the rules wizard is:

"Apply this rule after the message arrives with specific words in senders address reply using a specific template."

Tricks of the trade

Once you've got an efficient filtering system set up sorting out your emails will be a breeze, especially getting rid of emails you don't want. If your email software is set to check multiple ISP accounts you

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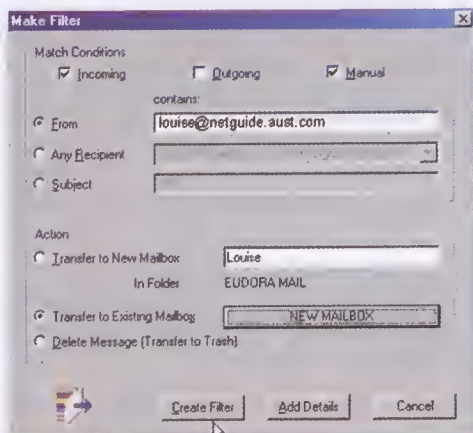
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EMAIL FILTERING



can direct mail into different mailboxes for each account. Play around with the filter options — there are many more nifty features in this area.

If you use an email package other than Eudora or Outlook check its help files for information on filtering and automated responses — there should be plenty of helpers to get you on your way.

In order to automatically respond to your email while you're on holiday leave your computer turned on and have the email software set to regularly check for email. Most software has an option that will dial into your ISP and download your mail each day and send off your automated responses. ■

straight in the bin

SPAM can be annoying and expensive, and unfortunately it's highly prolific on the Web. Downloading large quantities of junk mail can cost you time and money and if a savvy Web marketer gets hold of your email address the fun may never end.

You can use your email software filters to automatically send junk mail to your rubbish bin. Also check with your ISP as they may offer filtering services on their server.

There are also programs designed to kill it before it even reaches your desktop. Test drive some of these to see if they work for you. Most offer a free trial before you have to fork out any cash.

eFilter SpamNet www.eflash.com

Checks email for commercial mailouts and allows you to add keywords to dump, which is especially good if you want to avoid specific material.

Spam Attack Pro www.softwiz.com/html/spam_attack_pro.htm

Filters for over 2,100 known spammers and allows you to create a 'friends' list. You can block email from a specific domain, but nominate users from within that domain

SpamKiller www.spamkiller.com

Filter any part of a message including subject, senders address and message body. Keeps a record of deleted email so you don't unintentionally miss important mail.



NEW TO THE NET>> COOKIE MONSTER?

Cookies can make your surfing easier, by tailoring Web pages to your individual needs. **Nigel Horrocks** explains

NEWBIES ARE OFTEN AMAZED how a site they revisit seems to remember they had been there before. This is achieved using something called a "persistent cookie". A cookie — in computer terms — is simply a piece of data which is saved on your computer's hard drive by a Web server.

They have several uses. Cookies can store your user name and password. For example if you log on each day to a particular news site which initially required registration, the cookie will save you time. It means after initial registration, when you return to the site, you skip directly through to the content, as the cookie has "remembered" who you are and logged you in automatically.

Cookies are also used during online shopping, to keep track of any items you place into an electronic "shopping cart", until you go through the checkout.

The information stored on your hard drive is particular to each site. So, one site cannot access the information gained from your having visited another site. However, marketing sites, for exam-

ple, can check which ads you have clicked on, and build up a picture of what sites you have visited.

You will find evidence of the cookie files on your computer's hard drive. The location depends on the computer you are using and the browser version. Generally cookies are stored either with your preferences or in the same folder as your Web browser.

The baking process

When a Web site wants to check for information in a cookie, it asks your browser to examine your cookie file. If a cookie exists for the site in question, the information is sent to the server which hosts that site.

Some sites, such as Web email sites, will first ask you for a user name and password before placing a cookie on your hard disk containing that information. Sites can add new information to a cookie at any time — this is especially true during online shopping. As you add more goods to your order, this information is added to the cookie file saved by the shopping site.

If you have already handed over your credit card information to a shopping site you are revis-

iting, that information may not need to be entered again every time you go to make a purchase. However, this information is *not* kept on your hard drive but is instead stored on the shopping site's secure server — because cookies are not always sent securely, this is considered a safer option. In the above case, your browser sends your user name to the server, which then retrieves the credit card information from its system.

A new batch

Once your purchase is complete, the shopping site will request your browser to delete the

cookie. Next time you wish to shop at the same (or another) site, a new cookie is created.

Cookies are not everyone's cup of tea. Some users feel nervous about the thought of browsers being able to detect that you have been to a site before. Browsers have a preference option which, when set, will tell you every time a request is made to save a cookie on your hard disk, and give you the option of accepting or refusing. That way, you have control and knowledge over what is going on.

If you don't want any cookie files saved on your computer, there are several sites with



Looking forward to your family
exploring a new world on the Internet?

programs which can reject cookies before they are saved. PC users can download a "cookie crusher" and Mac users a "cookie cutter" from Download.com (www.download.com). More cookie info can be found at Cookie Central (www.cookiecentral.com), including a section on the "dark side of the cookie". Remember, though, that disabling cookies will cause some sites to function unpredictably.

In general, there is little to fear from cookies and they can even help some sites better serve your individual needs. They can help make your browsing faster and shopping more functional. ■



Find out more about cookies at www.cookiecentral.com

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gettingorganised

James Baker makes

Web site navigation easier

using directories and FTP clients

LAST MONTH WE LOOKED at how to set up an account with an ISP and how different types of accounts will result in different addresses for your Web site. So far what we have is a directory sitting on the hard disk of an ISP's computer, with a single file in it. "**hello.html**" is not a very exciting page yet, and it won't become any more so this month, but we will start to get it ready for action.

As Web sites develop, they consist of more and more files. You could use one very big HTML file to put up everything you want to say, but it will be slow to download and difficult to navigate. Hence information is broken up into several smaller pages.

Putting all those pages in the same directory on your site can be a dangerous business. You have to be very careful about maintaining the latest version on the site, and ensuring none of the files end up with the same name. At *NetGuide*, we have different naming conventions for a couple of key areas on our site. To simplify the job of keeping track of these areas, we use directories, exactly the same way you use directories or folders on your Mac or PC to organise files. This way, files that require the same name can be placed in their own directory without affecting other files. Daily news, for example, goes into a directory called "news", and other types of stories have their own directories.

Single index

The Web site we created last month consists of only one file at the moment — **hello.html**. This is sitting in the root directory of our site, and acting as an index file. It doesn't need a sub-directory, and in fact would be harder to locate if it was in one. It is a good idea to always maintain just one file in the root directory that acts as an index. This is the file that will lead viewers into all your other files. Depending on what sort of HTTP server your Internet Service Provider uses (check with your ISP) you should change the name of **hello.html** to either **index.html** or **default.html**, so that it will open automatically when your base URL is entered (eg, **www.netguide.com.au** opens our **index.html** file without the filename being specified in the address).

As this is the only file we have so far, there is no need for any other directories, but we want to create one anyway. One very good idea when organising files on a Web site is to keep all images in a separate directory, so we will create a directory simply called images. The full address for this will be **www.isp.com.au/bob/images**, and this is where we will place graphics in the future.

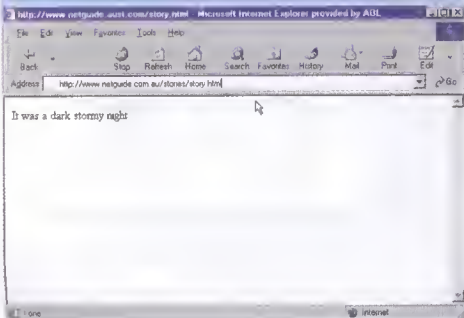
The same principle can now be used for any files you want to put on your Web site. Say you have a collection of photos you would like the world to see, a list of your favourite sites on the Web, some recipes you like, and some stories you have written that

you would like to see published, albeit electronically. You could just dump everything in the root directory of the server and let people find their way to each file by typing in the full address, **www.isp.com.au/bob/photos.html** or **www.isp.com.au/bob/story1.html**. But it would be much simpler to let users go straight to **www.isp.com.au/bob/**. If here you have an index file that the HTTP server can find, it will be displayed and will act as a directory for finding material on your site.

To stay organised, and avoid name clashes, you can create a folder for your stories, and have each of them as a distinct HTML file. These would be listed, with a description, in the index page, and clicking on a title would take the viewer to that story. Those visiting your site need never know how it is structured or organised, but they will appreciate a site that can be simply navigated.

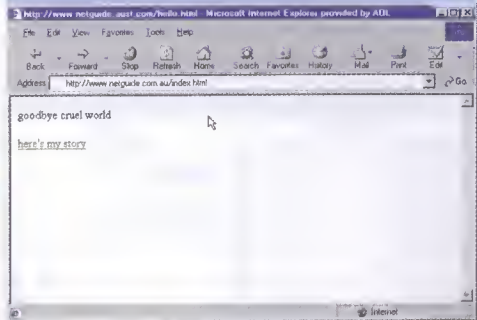
To test this theory, make a new HTML file called **story.html**. Type the following, using a text editor.

```
<html>
<body>
It was a dark and stormy night...
</body>
</html>
```



Go to the folder on your hard drive in which you saved hello.html (which should now be renamed **index.html** or **default.html**) and create a new folder called "stories". Save **story.html** in this folder. Open **index.html** and make the following changes marked in bold.

```
<html>
<body>
goodbye cruel world
<p><a href="stories/story.html">here's my story</a>
</body>
</html>
```



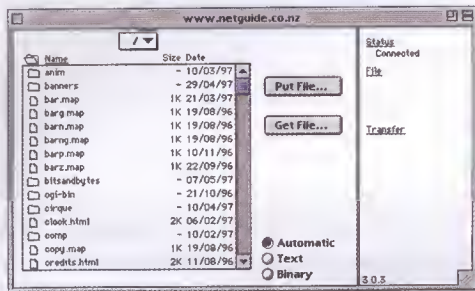
Now when you open **index.html** in your browser, you will see the words "here's my story" underlined (hyperlinks are underlined by default in most browsers; you can turn underlining on or off in your browser preferences). If you click on this link, it will take you to the **story.html** page you just created, which is itself sitting in the "stories" directory.

We'll explain linking pages more fully next month, but for now the important thing to note is the directory structure. The index file is telling the browser to go to a sub-directory of the same root directory. The / after "stories" says that the file is in that folder.

Remote changes

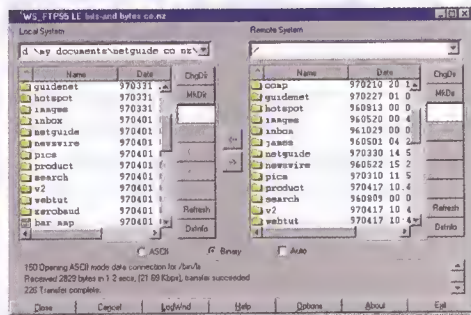
Finally this month, we should explain just how to do all this organising on your (remote) server directories. The one additional piece of software you will require is an FTP client. FTP (file transfer protocol) is the easiest means of getting files to and from a server, and the client software will allow you to change the directory structure, create folders, and move files.

There are a number of freeware and shareware FTP clients available, such as WS_FTP for Windows and Fetch for Macintosh (both of which can be downloaded from www.shareware.com). To use these you have to have your account details (ie, your login name and your password), and know the correct name of the directory in which your files reside, for example, "/bob".



Fetch for the Mac displays only the remote server.

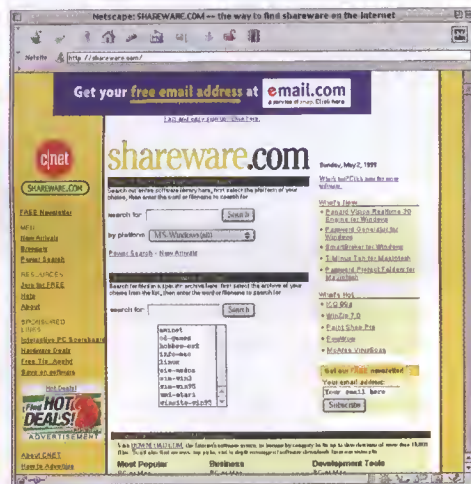
To log in, you simply enter the name of your ISP for the server name (eg, **isp.com.au**). Your username will be the same as you use for logging in to retrieve email, as will your password. The only other information you may need to enter, depending on how the server is set up, is your directory name, which will be blank (the default), or perhaps "bob" or "-bob" (depending on your ISP's setup). Once you've logged on, the FTP client will give you a file manager view of



WS_FTP: upload from local (left) to remote (right).

the directory on the server, and file manipulation can largely be done the same way it can be on your local machine.

So, that's what needs to be done, and how to do it. Now that we have some directories set up, we can start to do something a little more interesting with the pages we have. Next month we'll look into the elements that make up a page and start to explain some of those strange "tags".



You can download a number of freeware and shareware FTP programs from www.shareware.com.



NET TRENDS

Growing the Web

Domain name providers NetRegistry (www.netregistry.au.com) and Domain Names Australia (au.nu) keep churning out online entities. In March there were 4,617 new .au domains, an all time record, according to research group [www.consult](http://www.consult.com.au) (www.consult.com.au). The latest interesting and irrelevant tidbits from Australian namespace are:

- Longest name — honeysucklehealthdiscountsportsnutrition.com.au
- Shortest names — i.net.au and x.net.au
- Number of domains including the word 'australia' — 600
- Number of domains including the word 'olympic' — 24

And even more individuals and businesses are planning to launch sites. The Australian .net.au domain registry operated by Connect has placed 7,246 Australian place names on Reserved Status.

Online shopping

Consumers are growing in confidence slowly on the Net if the Christmas sales figures are anything to go by. 2,000 Australians bought a gift for someone through online shops whilst 21,000 bought something as a gift for themselves, says [www.consult](http://www.consult.com.au). This is just a small drop in the retail ocean but it's a start. [*Hopefully there will be a lot more gives next Christmas — Ed.*]

Radio in review

Radio has struggled online since its inception a few years ago, according to [www.consult](http://www.consult.com.au). Around 20 radio stations get regular traffic to their sites. [www.consult](http://www.consult.com.au) listed the top 10 Australian radio station Web sites during February as:

triplej.abc.net.au, mrock.com.au, www.961.com.au, fox.com.au, mmm.com.au, b105.com.au, ttfm.com.au, 2gb.com.au, mulrayfm.com.au and 2dayfm.com.au. ●



NET COOL

- * **Microsoft Media Player** > sorry RealAudio, move over (www.microsoft.com)
- * **Chaos** > music to your ears (www.cmm.com.au)
- * **Flying Ballet** > the new high but take out insurance (www.flying-ballet.com)
- * **WA Holidays** > take an air safari through the Kimberley (holiday-wa.net/helicopter.htm)
- * **Free CDs** > giving away your CD collection (www.nodomain.com/cd)
- * **Free PCs** > we'll have two thanks, but there is a catch (www.free-pc.com)
- * **Not the Real Star Wars** > not necessarily the trailer (www.moviejuice.com/1999/starwars_trailer.htm)
- * **E*trade** > Internet stocks doing amazing things (www.etrade.com.au)
- * **AFL** > the boys that fly (www.afl.com.au)
- * **Drudge report** > covering NATO strikes (www.drudgereport.com)



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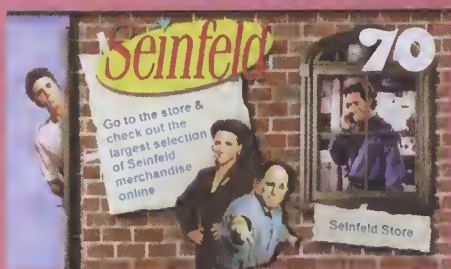
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TOP 50

Paid to surf >> Daniel Fallon,
Jason Jacobs & the NetGuide team

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- Television **70**
- Disabilities **72**
- Cool Site Sites **74**
- Elvis **76**
- Weird Experiments **78**
- Windows 98 **80**
- Site of the Month **82**



HOTSPOT

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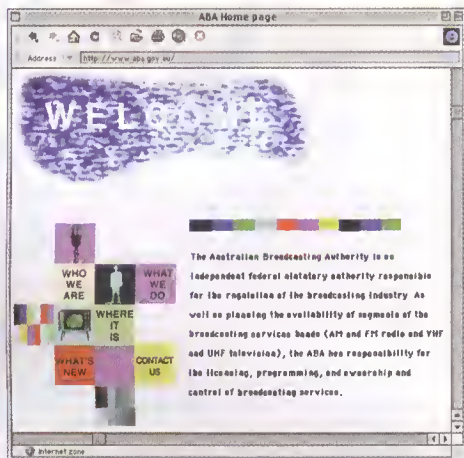
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Baker & McKenzie

www.bakerinfo.com/itc

This company specialises in information technology, communication and e-commerce. Its Global IT/C Law Alert is distributed by weekly email, and it's full of topical law news and information as well as having links to cases, legislation and policy papers. The email service is the best way to keep in touch with the latest IT law news such as the litigation relating to the damage caused by the Melissa virus. Register here to receive it. Although it's a US service, its documents normally cover a global perspective and issues that are relevant around here.



↑ ABA

www.aba.gov.au

The Australian Broadcasting Association plays a cornerstone roll in the government's plans to regulate the Internet and control porn sites. The ABA is set to become a watchdog for the industry. It will instruct Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to

block Web sites it deems illegal, after investigating complaints. ISPs will have to follow its instructions or could face fines. You'll find plenty of useful information on digital broadcasting and broadcast licensing as well as a families guide to the Internet here. Watch this space.

AustLII

www.austlii.edu.au

The Australasian Legal Information Institute has searchable databases that contain thousands of benchmark law cases for your eager eyes. It could be described as a scroll haven, especially if you don't refine your searches to specific topics or cases. There is something like 10,000 related business law cases documented online. Someone's got a case for RSI typing these in for our enjoyment, so enjoy.

Lawnet

lawnet.com.au

This OzEmail hosted property has plenty to offer surfers on various legal issues. You can search for case law and legislation for Australia and overseas, read electronic law reports and register for an email bulletin service. There's also a list of lawyers and law sites online, so you can pick and choose which one you want to pull you out of any future Y2K holes. There's a section on legal humour too, to make you feel better if you can't get out of the hole. Lawyers should enjoy this stop.

High Court of Australia

www.hcourt.gov.au

You don't take petty matters to the High Court of Australia. If you want to read which businesses are

spending big bucks on their legal fees, check out the monthly case summaries. It's all in legalese so you'll have to put on your legal goggles. Some buttered popcorn and loud rock'n'roll music in the background might help spice this site up as well.



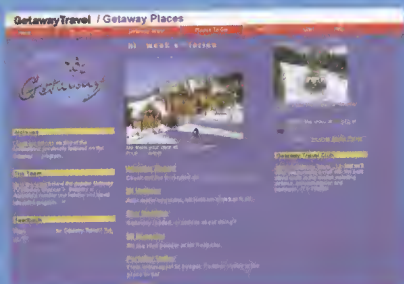
↑ Corrs Chambers Westgarth

www.corrs.com.au

Probably the biggest and meanest issue facing companies is the Millennium Bug. If you haven't got you're Y2K program under control, then it might be an idea to find out about the predicted legal repercussions from firms such as this. It takes a while to download this site's pages, but it offers a wealth of legal perspectives, case histories and seminar papers on issues as far ranging as alternative dispute resolution to workplace relations. You can dig into some of the juicier issues on the agenda such as native title too. The section 'Australia in perspective' has some very useful outlooks as well, including overviews on our tax system and our role as a regional business platform.

TELEVISION

HOTSPOT



Getaway

expedia.com.au/ally/getaway/

The TV site with the mostest. This site is truly impressive in what it attempts to achieve and what it delivers. It's got highlights from previous shows that can be viewed and chat rooms for discussion on various holiday locations. It features guides on destinations that include hotels, resorts and places of interest. You can also book and schedule your holidays online. This includes everything from flights, to hotel accommodation, to car hire. There's a currency converter, links to weather reports nationally and internationally, links to online maps and a special section on travelling hints and tips. A must have resource when planning your next vacation.

Ally McBeal

www.foxworld.com/ally/

Okay so she's taken the crown away from *Melrose Place* as the American show that we all either love or hate. Why are her skirts so short, and what does 'pikipsy' mean? Anyway, the official site has the usual fan stuff like photos, episode guides, and character profiles. It also has an "Ally Forum" where there are various newsgroup discussions, ho hum. There is a novel link to the CD of the soundtrack where you can download snippets of WAV files. If you're a devoted fan, you'll click away to your hearts content.

Screen Network Australia

www.sna.net.au

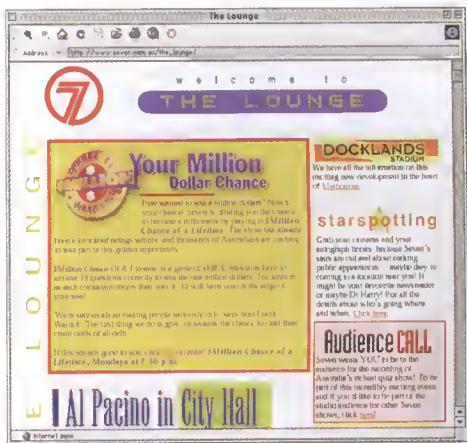
This is a little goldmine for all items relating to Australian film and television. You'll find links to over 230 sites for Australian TV. It combines links to online TV guides, fan's Web pages, and TV show and actor's Web sites. The interesting link is the "Great Moments on the Australian Screen". Here it has downloads from shows such as *Skippy* to *Neighbours*. It has also got clips by Kylie, Paul Hogan and Tony Bonner. Tony who? You know, the chap who played the helicopter pilot in *Skippy*, that Tony Bonner.

80's TV Theme Supersite

www.webhangers.com/~tvthemes/

Okay all you nostalgia buffs, this is the site that you've been waiting for. Stop searching for the *Hawaii Five-O* opening theme, you'll find it, and many other goodies, here. This site had me downloading theme's left, right and centre. It has all the kitsch TV opening theme's from the 80's — *Diff'rent Strokes*,

Family Ties, *Chips* and the eternal favourite, *The Muppet Show*. It only covers US shows, so some of the content isn't relevant ie. sports shows and news themes. However, I was quite surprised at how many of these American themes actually made their way to Australia. The site also has some funny links to other icons of the 80's including, game shows, TAB cola and Ronald Reagan.



Channel 7

www.seven.com.au

The Channel 7 site is easy on the eye and has lots of great content. You can send a postcard of your favourite soap star or meet them in scheduled chat sessions. Check out the link to Seven's Olympic site. Seven has also teamed up with Traveland to get their own holiday booking / resource site. It's not as comprehensive as the *Getaway* site, yet it's still very good. 'The Lounge' is also a cool section on the site that has insider gossip on up-coming shows as well as tickets to become an audience member at the taping of Channel 7 shows.



↑ Seinfeld

www.spe.sony.com/tv/shows/seinfeld/index.html

Well the television series may have gone to pasture but the fans still can't get enough of the show about nothing. This official site has got enough in it to keep avid fans amused. I found the "Virtual Theatre" really interesting. Here you can go for a tour around Monk's café or Jerry's Apartment. There's some video files to download as well as some pictures. The surprising fact was that they were still in the process of posting some audio files, you thought they would have their act together by now!

Yahoo TV Guide

www.yahoo.com.au/tv/

Don't you hate it when you've settled down into the sofa, remote control in hand and...no TV program guide! Well the answer for your online TV Guide is to go to Yahoo. This site really has done its homework. There are options to view the programming for all states, as well as cable television. I was really impressed by the depth of information available. After choosing what state you want, you are then presented with what's on. By drilling down further, you can get reviews and information about each program. A great site when the TV guide goes missing.

DISABILITIES



Accessibility

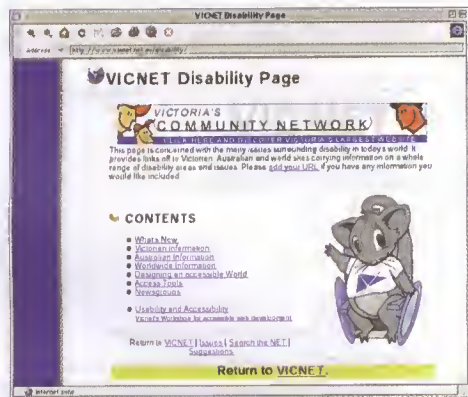
accessibility.austlii.gov.au

This government site aims to raise awareness of accessibility issues for people with disabilities who wish to use online services. It's a good spot to find out information on services and technology that can help people get connected, from hardware and software solutions to training and education issues. The site is driven by a search facility that lets you drill down on the information you need fast. I typed in 'browser' and got back a variety of information covering related research projects, case studies, products and services, and standards and guidelines. It's a comprehensive facility built to keep you in the know.

Disability Net

www.disabilitynet.co.uk

Disability Net is a huge UK-based site with a number of cool features. Although it's British-based, this site can put you in touch with penpal contacts throughout the world. There's a regular obituary section, which isn't very cheerful, but the best societies are those which remember their heroes and Disability Net is creating its own society online. This society is backed up with a commercial arm — there's an advertising and shopping network for disabled goods and services. But best of all, Disability Net helps disabled people start their own sites. When enough disabled people have launched Web pages, Disability Net will be a powerful network for ideas and communication.



↑ VicNet

www.vicnet.net.au/disability/

This is a great stop for finding disability related sites. It's a Victorian network offering so you'll find Victorian links there, but there's also top links section on Australian and world sites. There's also a list of links to companies and technology making

it easier for people with disabilities to surf, such as the MultiWeb Internet Browser and Disability Internet Resources. There's a tools section as well, covering more technology from entities such as IBM and Technical Solutions Australia.

Kala

kala.webone.com.au

Kala looks out for young people with special needs. Surf away to the beat of the background music as you look through pics of kids in action or read about the history of the association. There's also a lovely piece of writing under the heading 'a special kid'. Kala originally started off as a swim/exercise class as it developed the philosophy – 'if you can dream it, you can do it'. There are no limits, so let's get into it. I dug the midi version of 'Green Onions'. You'll hear some familiar tunes here too.

DAWN

www.users.cts.com/crash/c/calemont/dawn.html

DAWN — or the Disability Awareness Webring Network — is a communications network for disabled people worldwide. Once participants have signed onto the service (for free) they can join in a global communications network. Although it offers many other resources, it's the unrivalled online communication that is DAWN's most unique asset. DAWN recognises the need for communication to facilitate consciousness raising. Accordingly, this site acts as a cyber-meeting place for disabled people from around the world and facilitates real-time chat. Most of the other disability related sites also offer communication services, but DAWN is one of the few primarily dedicated to them.

Amputee Net Centre

vandyke.digiweb.com/default.htm

This site provides assistance for people needing prosthetics. It aims to be of use to people who have had a prosthesis for a long time as well as those who are about to get one for the first time. There's a guide to choosing your prosthesis and some tips on shopping around for a good doctor, etc. The Amputee Net Centre also has a little bit of political content, with a small feature about one of the site's creators who spent some time lobbying the government. The nicely laid out site acts as a rallying point and a place to share information.



↑ International Paralympics Committee

info.lut.ac.uk/research/paad/ipc/ipc.html

The Paralympics run alongside the Olympics. There are many sites about the Paralympic movement but this one tops them all because it has such a comprehensive index of sports for the disabled. You can find all the rules to all the games played at the paralympics with photos demonstrating them — wheelchair rugby looks like good fun, but I don't fancy the powerlifting. The site also records the activities and daily workings of the Paralympic Committee.

COOL SITE SITES

HOTSPOT



RubberChicken Fun Site of the Week

rubberchicken.fun.net.au/~rubberchicken/

"If life hands you lemons, make an omelette!" says the rubber chicken. Check out the current fun site of the week, and check the archives for sites that are just that... fun. No more boring run-of-the-mill sites that just have sparkly graphics, this is great content. Send a friend some FakeMail. This is truly hilarious. Give your friend a fake parking ticket, send them a fine for jaywalking, or fake test results. Step into the Fun House and try the Famous Face Challenge, or have a go on the Celebrity Blender and liquefy such figures as Clinton, Gates and Leno. This site is loads of fun and sure to keep you occupied for hours.

Where did we go?

usrwww.mpx.com.au/~ianw/

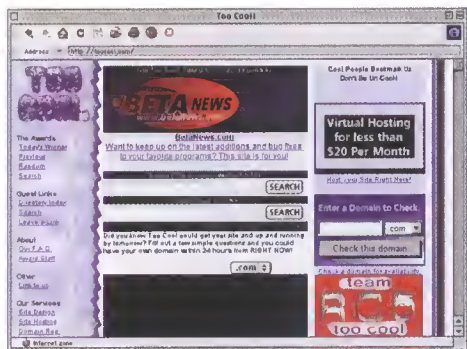
A weekly listing of the hot traffic sites in Australia. If you want to see what's popular, according to this site's rankings, then head on down. The site says the ranking is "based on an Australia-wide sample of Web requests by Australians...calculated using raw traffic". The results are interesting, but site owners do warn of "a slight Melbourne bias", so don't go taking the results as gospel.



↑ Yell UK Web Awards 1998

www.yell.co.uk/yell/yellawards/

While not a daily, weekly or monthly site award the Yell UK Web Awards are an annual event that recognises excellence in Web design in the UK. The awards also aim to set an industry standard and to promote the use of the Web. Check out what sites are making waves in the UK, compared to Australian Web sites. You can view the 1997 winners for each category. This site is an ideal stop for budding Web designers looking to start a career in this growing profession. See also the Webby Awards (www.thewebbies.com).



↑ Too Cool!

www.toocool.com

If you like lots of flashing images and ads you'll like this site. But you can't blame the Webmasters of these sites for their page-wide advertising. After all, it can be quite a job searching out and reviewing a site daily. The site appears to be a daily award but it doesn't reflect it too well. You can search the archives of past winners, check out a random sites, and browse the guest links. You can even find out what browser visitors to the site are using. See also Project Cool (www.projectcool.com), SODA (www.soda.co.nz) and High Five (www.highfive.com).

Cool Site of the Day

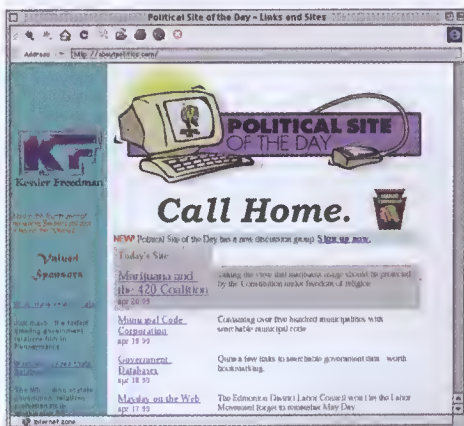
www.coolsiteoftheday.com

This is the original site of the day award site that started the craze that's now a worldwide phenomenon. It is a good place to start if you're not sure what you're looking for and has numerous categories of great sites including all-time favourite topics such as news, sports, software, music and travel. This is one place where your site can compete on a global scale with the rest of the Web for the highest accolades. Get listed here and you're in for some serious traffic.

Dog Sites of the Month

www.st.rim.or.jp/~ito/d/dogmark.html

So many people love their dogs! If you don't put up a home page for yourself, you can always devote one to your pet. This site gathers some of the best ones each month. Recent winner: Zoe's "My life as a dog" site about a Labrador retriever who says he has so far learnt the phrases "Go away" and "Get in the car". The clever dog has also learnt HTML by the look of the site. You can send in your own dog site and vote on which of the listed ones you think is the best.



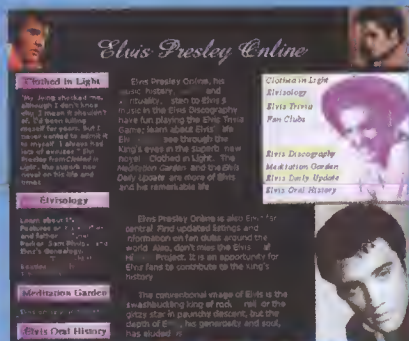
↑ Political Site of the Day

www.aboutpolitics.com

While this may not be the most stimulating of subject areas, the Political Site of the Day is a brave move into picking out the best of online politics. You'll find the best political sites here daily, and the archives which stretch back to July 1995 showcase a virtually complete directory of where to go for political news and information. A helpful site if politics is your thing.

ELVIS

HOT SPOT



Elvis Presley Online

www.elvispresleyonline.com

This site offers more than most Elvis sites put together, with some vital elements that others have all too often missed. The Life and Times of Elvis is a comprehensive look at his career with photos and extensive detail including a passage by John Lennon about when *The Beatles* met Elvis. If you were ever around to see an Elvis performance you can share the experience with the world and post your review. Another interesting section is the Elvis daily update where you can find out what Elvis was doing on this date in history. Then have a go on the Elvis trivia to test your knowledge.

Elvis

www.nwlink.com/~timelvis/new_elvis.html

This site is the largest directory of Elvis links on the Web (or so it claims), but in the midst of the hundreds of Elvis sites it seems to have got lost in the crowd, serving up a measly 7,000 hits in nearly three years. But don't let that sway you, the site really does deliver as intended with categories including Elvis art, sacred Elvis sites, Elvis is alive pages (yes, there are a lot of them), Elvis sightings pages and more. This is the only place you'll need to go if are lost searching for the elusive Elvis.



↑ Elvis Sightings

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/1061/

As with many of the sites we review in the Top 50 it is said again and again... "Only in America". Don't let the boring grey background and lack of graphical creativity distract you from this site, it is possibly the best Elvis sightings site on the Internet. The site boasts true accounts of real Elvis sightings. Some of it is an apparent mockery of the people who actually believe their own stories, but overall it's all in good fun. Did someone say crackpot?



↑ Elvis Commemorative Video Collection

www.mgm.com/elvis/

If it's Elvis memorabilia you seek, this site has plenty of it, and in massive quantities: 18 Elvis videos (or Elvideos), complete audio collections from his musical career, plus other bits and pieces, including posters, mugs, keyrings and T-shirts. You can also visit the "Ask Elvis" section for some Shockwave advice from the King. You get yes or no answers only, so don't expect miracles. And you can also find profiles on Elvis' leading ladies, who made him the world's great lover on the big screen.

Elvisly Yours - Elvis Memorabilia

www.elvisly-yours.com

This is another great site if you're hunting down Elvis memorabilia. Apply now for your Elvis Presley Mastercard! Yes, it's true. The online store contains over 30 different items including books, clothing, mugs, mousepads and phonecards. The site also contains other sections with regularly-updated news and related information, and a full review of the travelling Vince Everett Elvis Presley Museum.

Elvis Presley's Graceland

www.elvis-presley.com

This site is an official authorised Elvis Web site and is home to everything that is Elvis, Graceland and more. If you're planning a trip to the US and Graceland is a planned destination, you can find all the information you need here with pricing and tour details. Other features of the site include an online store for Elvis collectibles, news direct from Graceland, an event calendar and an extensive section answering frequently asked questions pertaining to Elvis and Graceland.



↑ Rory Allen - Tribute to the King

www.roryallen.com

Rory Allen is a man who does Elvis impersonations for a living, and his Web site was by far the best Elvis impersonator site out of the many I found on the Web. You can follow Rory's travels as he mimics the King in different cities around America and internationally. He is considered one of the top impersonators in the world and has been well received by the most faithful Elvis fans and friends. Read up on the testimonials of satisfied venues and then book Rory for your next 50s, 60s or 70s party.

WEIRD EXPERIMENTS

HOTSPOT



Bunny Survival Tests

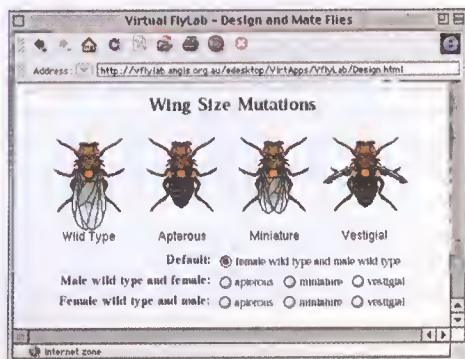
www.profs.gulfnet/~irvina/bunnies/

The animal lover will need to close their eyes. This site subjects marshmallow bunnies to often painful and unusually cruel tests. Among them: the Hot tub test – immersing them in boiling water and allowing them to float. After 10 seconds, subjects started to lose cohesion and apparently start to excrete something that causes the water to froth. The working theory is that this is a natural way of frightening predators away. The bunnies did better with the electricity test, surviving up to 1,250 volts. Most bizarre — a control bunny cheered researchers on while testing a subject “it was later found out that the subject had married his sister.” Frantically funny.

George Goble Home Page

ghg.ecn.purdue.edu

Don't try this at home when it's BBQ time. On this site you can watch in horror as George tries lighting the grill with three gallons of liquid oxygen. His experiment started with 60 lbs of charcoal, 40 lbs of which he burnt up in three seconds. The result was a grill ready to cook on in about three seconds, and all the old grease and last year's hamburgers burned off. Next time around, 10 gallons of liquid oxygen was dumped onto two grills. Everyone was impressed except his local fire department. The site says he has been using explosives, but he doesn't do that any more. No kidding!



↑ Virtual FlyLab

vflylab.calstatela.edu/edesktop/VirtApps/VflyLab/IntroVflyLab.html

Here's a way to mess with science. Okay, it's really an educational application for learning the principles of genetic inheritance. You play the role of a research geneticist. You design matings between female and male fruit flies carrying one or more genetic mutations. After selecting the mutations for the two parent flies and clicking the Mate but-

ton, you will be returned a document containing the images of the parent and offspring flies. Virtual FlyLab will apply the correct rules of genetic inheritance to these mutations to obtain the offspring. It is your job to determine these rules based on the "experimental" results.

Strawberry Pop Tart Blow Torches

www.sci.tamucc.edu/~pmichaud/toast/

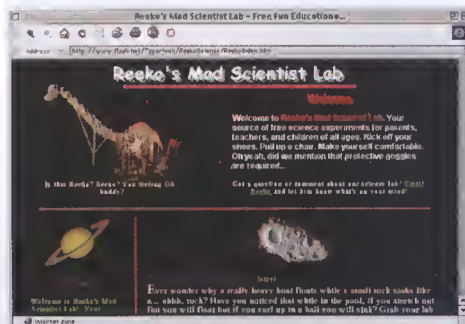
Columnist Dave Barry observed that an American delicacy called Kellogg's Strawberry Pop Tarts could be made to emit flames "like a blow torch" if left in a toaster too long. This researcher who specialises in the field of "food entertainment" declared this "a new frontier that required further exploration". He found that Strawberry Pop Tarts may be a cheap and inexpensive source of incendiary devices. Toasters which fail to eject Pop Tarts cause the Pop Tarts to emit flames 10 to 18 inches in height. Again, to save the under-staffed fire service anguish, leave this sort of experiment to qualified food entertainment researchers.

If They Mated...

www.nbc.com/NBCconan/index.asp?section=mated

Another so-called innocent experiment gone horribly wrong. US channel NBC has computer technology they say is so sophisticated it could cure cancer or bring about world peace. But what do they do with it? Use it for some warped dating game — of sorts. Have a go, with — among others — musical dates Sheryl Crow and Dwight Yoakam. There's a similar game using characters from The X-Files at www.mrshowbiz.com/games/surgery/xfiles/. There, another warped person thinks aliens

shouldn't be the only ones that get to create cross-species hybrids. Try your luck with Gillian Anderson and Martin Landau.



↑ Strange Acting Goop

flash.net/~spartech/ReekoScience/ExpOobleckh.htm

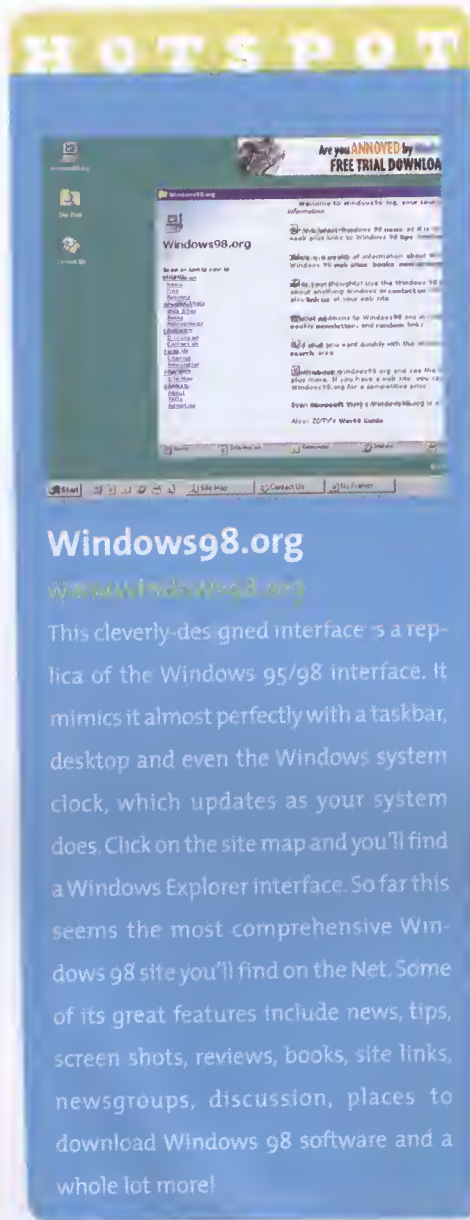
Here's one recipe you won't find in the popular cook books. Ever had a hot, steaming cup of Oobleckh? The stuff is nasty! But it does exhibit some interesting properties. This site invites you to put one and a half cups of cornstarch into a bowl, add a cup of water and mix well. Sounds innocent enough until you slowly dip your finger into the gooey mixture. Reeko's Mad Scientist Lab will take you through what happens.

Just Because Club

www.slimeworld.org/xxaxx/jbc_ndx.html

If you have seen the Truman Show and are starting to wonder if your own life is one big TV show, this site gives you the news that it is true. In fact, you can let your mind follow whatever train of thought you have. "What if we could send a robot to Mars and move it around looking at stuff?". Hang on, think we've heard that one somewhere before.

WINDOWS 98



Windows98.org

www.windows98.org

This cleverly-designed interface is a replica of the Windows 95/98 interface. It mimics it almost perfectly with a taskbar, desktop and even the Windows system clock, which updates as your system does. Click on the site map and you'll find a Windows Explorer interface. So far this seems the most comprehensive Windows 98 site you'll find on the Net. Some of its great features include news, tips, screen shots, reviews, books, site links, newsgroups, discussion, places to download Windows 98 software and a whole lot more!

Win Planet

www.wing8.net

This site is an in-depth analysis of the debate over whether Windows 98 is a better operating system than Windows 95 and whether it is an essential upgrade for Windows 95. But you'll find more than just debate at this site with a bundle of free information ranging from tech support to usage and performance optimisation tips, reviews, reports, and how-tos. Plus you'll find this all for Win 98, 95, CE, 3.1 and NT.

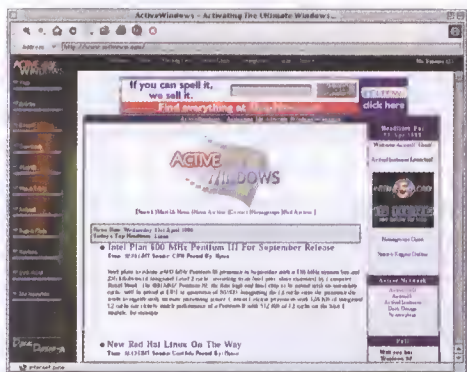


WinFiles

www.winfiles.com

WinFiles.com used to be called Windows95.com. It's a software archive of shareware, freeware, drivers and patches for all versions of Windows, including 95, CE and NT. It now has a focus on Windows 98. Software categories include desktop themes, utilities, games, Internet and networking tools, multimedia and graphics tools, authoring and programming tools, and information management. If you're feeling overwhelmed by the sheer abundance of

software programs you can also order the WinFiles CD-ROM full of all the software it displays.



Active Windows

www.activewin.com

This is your Windows 98 and IE4 information centre and is packed full of useful content. When you enter the front page you'll find the most recent ActiveWin news, which includes new programs, drivers, beta software and upgrades. Other features on the site include the regular selection of downloads (although it is a great selection) for improving the performance of your new system, tips and tricks, news, reviews and Win 95/98 desktop themes which you can download. You may want to view this site in IE4 to take full advantage of its design structure.

NetPropensity Information About Windows98

netpropensity.com/windows98/

This Web site is designed to provide you with Windows 98 information, tips and tricks, news, shareware and discussion. A unique feature of the site shows you how to upgrade to Win 98 for free

simply by downloading and installing various components available on the Net that make up the system. These include programs you may already have installed with the Windows 95 Service Pack, patches and bug fixes, new dial-up networking components, Internet Explorer 4 (which contains most of the new features) and other components to enhance your machine.

Windows 98 Megasite

www.winmag.com/Win98/default.htm

The Windows 98 Megasite contains such readings as "A detailed look at what makes Windows 98 tick" and "Top 28 reasons to like Win 98". Learn how to get the most out of Windows 98 and Internet Explorer 4, find out what the top ten system utilities are and how you can best use them to solve or avoid problems. The Windows 98 Megasite also has a free email newsletter you can subscribe to for news about Windows 98 and other related software areas. Check out the other sections of this site too, with support for other Windows operating systems.

The Ultimate Guide

www.zdnet.com/products/windows/98.html

Unlock the hidden secrets behind Windows 98, 95 and NT with full coverage of the latest operating system from Microsoft. Learn why you should upgrade and find out about the latest features supporting by Win 98. Get the inside story from PC World US as they rigorously test the system hardware and software performance and improvements, system utilities, load speeds and system optimisation. Download Windows software, read the reviews and opinion, and even join in the discussion.



SITE OF THE MONTH



Stories of the Dreaming

www.dreamtime.net.au

The Dreamtime – most Australians know what the term refers to, but how many know the different stories that make up the Dreamtime? It's often referred to as 'the time of the creation of things'. If you want to know more about it know, Stories of the Dreaming is a brilliant place to start.

The site, a joint initiative between the Australian Museum (www.austmus.gov.au) and Australia's Cultural Network (www.acn.net.au), has collected cultural stories from indigenous groups or nations throughout Australia. There's a wealth of information here about what the Dreamtime is, the stories that make it up and why they are integral to the culture of the groups to which they belong. Start your journey with the 'Role of Storytelling' to get a feel for why these stories are so important.

The 'Stories' section has a range of tales told by the custodian of the story, starting with the *Creation Story*. Choose your preferred format – text, audio and low and high quality video, and enjoy the experience. The stories often use words and terms from the language of the group, so you'll find the glossary section invaluable.

After clicking on 'Custodianship' you can learn how the stories of the Dreamtime were handed down from the elders to the next generation of indigenous people. The stories you'll read here have literally been passed down over thousands of years.

This is a great site that is interesting as well as educational. ■

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KoolFM (www.koolfm.com.au) **RP**

2WS (www.mulrayfm.com.au) **RP**

News Radio (www.abc.net.au/newsradio/) **RP**

Radio Australia (www.abc.net.au/ra/) **RP**

SRA-FM (www.sra.org.au) **RP**

Triple J (www.abc.net.au/triplej/) **RP**

Triple M (mrock.village.com.au) **RP**

Z-FM (www.aaa.com.au/z-fm/) **RP**

International – anytime

Alternative Entertainment Network

(www.aentv.com) **RP**

America's Health Network (www.ahn.com) **RP**

American Independent Network (www.tmstv.com/SkedList/aia/) **??**

BBC (news.bbc.co.uk), hourly updates **RP**

CNN (www.cnn.com), live broadcasts plus a recent edition of the Headline news show **RP**

Court TV (www.courtstv.com/schedule/), America's real court dramas broadcast live **RP**

Hollywood Shorts (www.lalive.com/

hollywoodshorts/), short films from around the world, updated monthly **RP MP**

Juice TV (www.juicetv.com), music clips on demand, daily Net-only show at 4.30pm **RP**

Microsoft Business TV (www.broadcast.com/video/windowsmedia/mstv/), get the most from the Net, deal with Net security and more **NS**

Radio New Zealand (www.rnz.co.nz) **RP**

NZ NetNews weekly Internet news programme (nznetnews.co.nz) **RP**

Police Scanner (www.policescanner.com) **RP MP**

Audio Books — fiction (broadcast.com/books/Fiction/) **RP**

Australia scheduled shows

DAILY, ABC NewsRadio Stock Market Report (abc.net.au/newsradio/finance.htm). Updated each weekday afternoon **MP RP**

TUES, 2.15pm In Conversation with Shane Mahony (abc.net.au/rural/conversation/). Weekly chat with rural leaders plus archived chats **RP MP**

AUGUST 7th, 10am Australian Inline Music Awards (www.onya.com.au). Live broadcast **??**

International scheduled shows

DAILY, 4AM: Financail Times Business Times (www.ft-television.com/today/audio/ftbt.htm), European Business roundup **RP**

MON, 12PM to 2PM: The Single Connection (www.broadcast.com/lightsource/live/single/). Ben Young hosts a radio talk show for singles **RP**

TUE-FRI, 5PM: Comedy Central (www.comedycentral.com/dailyshow/), a daily show from the team behind shows like South Park **RP**

SUN, 8AM: Boot Scoot'n Party'n Nights (www.broadcast.com/premrad/shows/bootscoot/) **NS**

Concerts

MAY 23rd: Ominous Seapods (www.liveconcerts.com) **RP**

MAY 30th: The Kung Fu Knowledge Tour (www.liveconcerts.com) **RP**

JUNE 22nd: The Freshmaker Tour – Long Island (www.mentos.com) **RP**

MAY 17th, 10am: Fourplay (www.bluenote.net) **RP**

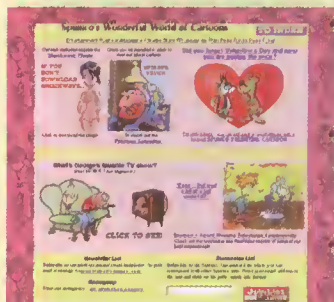
JUNE 10th, 10am: Diane Schuur **RP** (www.bluenote.net) **RP**

JULY 22nd, 10am: Gabriela Anders (www.bluenote.net) **RP**

CARTOON OF THE MONTH

www.spumco.com

Check out the series of shockwave cartoons from Spumco. Created by the same mastermind behind the Ren and Stimpy cartoon series, the latest online only creation is a hoot. The George Liquor show is a masterpiece in online animation. At 56k it looks superb, but still flows nicely at lower speeds. There are seven episodes up now and more coming. Also check out the Bjork video on the site – it's splendid. **SW**



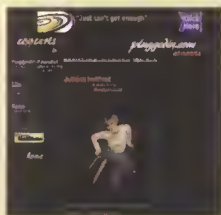
Sites to Watch

liveconcerts.com
www.when.com
broadcast.com
www.pluggedin.com
events.yahoo.com
www.timecast.com
www.jamtv.com
www.itvideov.co.nz
www.ttalk.com
www.real.com
www.wilma.com
www.melbourne.net/
livegigs/

ARCHIVE OF THE MONTH – Julianna Hatfield

www.pluggedin.com/concerts/julianahatfield.html

You may remember Julianna Hatfield from her smash hit "Spin the bottle" and the fabulous movie soundtrack that went with Reality Bites (www.wam.umd.edu/~ahennig/reality.html). She's been around for awhile, with her golden years happening between 1989 and 1995, but faithful followers are



keeping her alive online. Did you know she played bass and sang backing vocals on the Lemonheads. It's a shame about Ray LP? **RP**

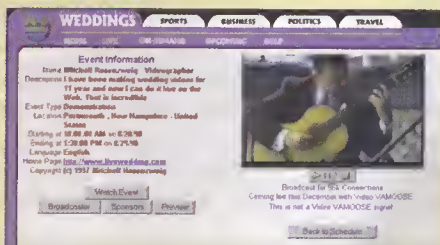
- RP** RealPlayer
- ??** Unknown
- LP** Live Picture
- SW** Shockwave
- MS** MS Netshow
- MP** Windows Media Player

*ALL DATES AND TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

NAF WEBCAM OF THE MONTH

www.livewedding.com/live/

Only in America will people air their dirty laundry in public. They share their deepest darkest secrets on live television talkback shows every day of the week. If you can't get on TV, you can at least get on the Web. The Live Weddings site will let you waltz down the aisle with American couples. When we check there were four couples in the line-up and you can chat with other Web watchers. You could be next! **RP**



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SHOPGUIDE

Claire McFarland takes a gander at hot technology on the market

>object of desire

Sharp PV-5000A

RRP \$1,869

Business travel is not at all glamorous, no matter what you may hear. There are hours spent in airports and destinations where you see no more of the country than your taxi window affords you. You may as well try and add as much excitement to it as you can, so aim to be the envy of any travelling companions or fellow residents of the corporate airline lounges with the latest technology. Harris Technology (www.ht.com.au) is featuring a world first notebook from Sharp, the PV-5000A, a small and practical notebook running Windows CE.



Weighing in at 1.2kg (that's less than your average school maths textbook), with a 20.5cm colour LCD touch screen, this is one groovy product that will be sure to liven up the business of travel. Harris Technology is a one-stop shop on the Net for all your computing needs with over 30,000 products available. You can order online and then track your order process right through to delivery.

Motorola Jazz

RRP \$59 plus \$10 per month Telstra plan

Feeling immobile? It doesn't have to be like that. If pricing is the reason you have been holding off on getting connected to the mobile network, you might be swayed by some of the new pricing deals available. The rather cool looking Motorola Jazz mobile is more affordable. The Strathfield Group (www.strathfield.com.au) has an easy to use e-commerce site specialising in mobile communications, office products, car entertainment and car security. Go to the Strathfield Group and enter a search for 'Motorola Jazz'.

Gateway RentWay

www.gw2k.com.au/product/rentway/

Why buy when you can rent? RentWay allows you to always have the absolute latest technology at your fingertips and chalk up some tax deductions at the same time. Gateway Computers have a system called RentWay through which you can rent computers, printers and other computer equipment making payments by the month. You can apply through the Gateway Computers Web site, and applications of up to \$20,000 are processed within 20 minutes. Spend that time deciding exactly what you want from Gateways extensive online catalogue. ■

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FARFETCHED

Raewyn Whyte enjoys a late autumn in Cape Town, taking in wine trails and deserted beaches

> exploring the cape

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT MONTH TO visit Cape Town, on the far South Western tip of Africa. It is late autumn and past the peak of the tourist season, so accommodation and car rental prices are lower.

Cape Town's most popular tourist attractions are the cable car ride to the top of Table Mountain, 1,068m above the city (www.citylife.co.za/tablemnt.htm), the Victoria & Albert Waterfront complex (www.waterfront.co.za) packed with hundreds of shops, restaurants, bars and nightclubs for which Cape Town is known (www.citylife.co.za), and Robben Island (www.robben-island.org.za), formerly a notorious prison. Other local attractions include a three hour tour of the impoverished Townships where 80% of the population live, the deserted beaches of Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, or a visit to The Two Oceans Aquarium (www.aquacape.co.za).

Most tourists join bus tours or rent cars so they can freely explore the Cape of Good Hope area. Many follow the Winelands trail, visiting one, several, or all of the 97 local wineries (www.mweb.co.za/wine/) of South Africa's 300 year-old wine industry, tasting wines and sampling local cuisine.

The very popular Garden Route (www.gardenroute.org.za) lies between Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, and includes forested lakeland areas, mountain passes, the 8,500 species of the fynbos biome (www.southafrica.net/tourism/westerncape.html), and the Indian Ocean coastline. Noted attractions are ostrich and chee-

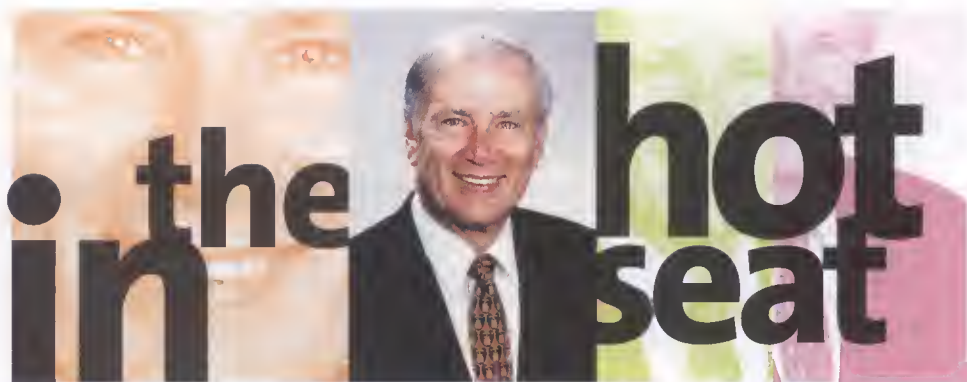


tah farms around Oudtshoorn (www.oudtshoorn.co.za), the 70 million year old limestone Cango Caves (www.mweb.co.za/congacaves), the Knysna Elephant Park (www.knysna.co.za/elephant/) and an oyster feast at Knysna Lagoon (www.knysna.co.za)

Outdoor adventure fans can indulge in parasailing, rock climbing, mountain biking, sea kayaking, scuba diving. The South African National Gallery and numerous small galleries around the town will satisfy art fans (www.arthrob.co.za). Those who enjoy being pampered can take a one day round-trip aboard the luxurious Rovos Rail (www.rovos.co.za), out and back to Port Elizabeth, or if a virtual tour is preferred, try CapeCam — Virtual Cape Town (www.24.com/travel/camera_site/camera.asp). ■

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Daniel Fallon catches up with Senator Alston about his plans to change the digital landscape

BEING THE SENATOR FOR Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (www.dcit.gov.au), Richard Alston is the government guru regarding the big issues facing the community. Cleaning up Internet porn content, dishing out licences for digital television and making sure the country doesn't fall into a black hole for lack of Y2K compliance are just a few tasks his government is faced with.

How does the government plan to clean up the Internet?

A complaints mechanism will be established in which any person can complain to the Australian Broadcasting Authority (www.aba.org.au) about online content that they find offensive. If the National Classification Board considers that Australian material subject to complaint is RC, X or R (but lacks adult verification) the ABA will issue a takedown notice to the relevant Internet Service Provider to prevent access to the material.

In relation to overseas content subject to complaint, if the ABA considers the overseas material to be equivalent to RC or X categories, it will notify the police to inform overseas authorities as appropriate and notify services providers about the way in which the material is to be treated as specified in self regulatory codes of practice.

The Government acknowledges that there are technical difficulties with blocking all material that is hosted overseas but considers that where it is technically feasible and commercially viable to block material this should be done. It is not acceptable to make no attempt at all on the basis that it may be difficult.

Under the legislation the industry will be expected in the first instance to propose appropriate procedures for blocking which will be included in self regulatory codes of practice...A community/industry advisory body will be established to monitor material, operate a "hotline" to receive complaints and

pass this information to the ABA and police authorities. It will also advise the public about options such as filtering software that are available.

Will this plan slow the network?

There have been suggestions from some members of the industry that the government will be mandating the use of particular technologies. It is important to note that this is not correct and in particular that the government is not requiring service providers to purchase proxy servers. The code of practices developed by the industry in association with the ABA will set out procedures for blocking, which take into account technical limitations and cost considerations.

When is digital television due to go online?

Under the Television Broadcasting Services (Digital Conversion) Act 1998 free-to-air broadcasters will be provided with spectrum to convert to digital. This is required to commence on 1 January 2001 in metropolitan licence areas (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth) and between 1 January 2001 and 1 January 2004 in regional licence areas. Services will be progressively rolled out from the commencement. Free-to-air broadcasters must simulcast in analog and digital for at least the first eight years.

Broadcasters are required to provide high definition television to the public from 1 January 2001. Although they will be allowed to provide enhanced programming, they will not be able to multichannel or provide subscription TV. This will be reviewed before 31 December 2005.

The Digital Conversion Act requires that several reviews take place by 1 January 2000. The reviews include multichannelling by national broadcasters, formats and targets for HDTV, captioning, provision of new services in underserved areas, spectrum allocation for datacasting and community television, retransmission for free to air broadcasts and convergence.

Will licences be given to telco's, Internet companies and free-to-air stations?

Each existing commercial and national free to air broadcaster will be provided with the necessary channels to provide digital television broadcasts. Spare spectrum not required in the conversion of broadcasters to digital will be identified by the Australian Broadcasting Authority and made available, on a competitive basis, for the provision of datacasting spectrum. Telecommunications and Internet companies will be eligible to bid for this spectrum, along with any other interested party, but not free to air stations.

What will digital TV mean for consumers?

Digital television is a major change for the industry and for consumers. Consumers will have access to high definition, wide screen television programs, and other kinds of services which digital broadcasting technology allows, such as datacasting and multichannel services (subject to decisions to be made by Government following the statutory).

Which sites do you like to visit?

Some of the sites that I access regularly include footy99 (www.footy99.com.au) and AFL (www.afl.com.au), Amazon.com (www.amazon.com.au) and Barnes and Noble's (www.barnesandnoble.com) sites, and the Fairfax (www.fairfax.com.au), PBL (www.pbl.com.au) and ABC (www.abc.net.au) sites.

How do you think consumers and businesses will be affected by Y2K at the end of the millennium?

Australia is well placed to make a relatively smooth transition to the year 2000. Internationally, Australia is recognised as one of the best prepared countries in the world. However, none of us can afford to be complacent — a lot of work still needs to be done, particularly in the area of small business. ■



Sharpetailers smart business

The challenge for e-commerce vendors is to convert browsers to shoppers, as **Marc Phillips** explains

RECENT RESEARCH FROM THE USA shows there's a significant chasm opening between those Internet users who purchase online and those who don't. People who already use the Internet to buy goods and services are content. People who have yet to purchase online are, at best, fearful of the process and, at worse, hostile to the idea of online shopping.

From this, we can deduce some powerful conclusions. On the one hand the research indicates that electronic retailers (etailers) who get it right can expect to win a great deal of repeat business. This translates into considerable and long-lasting success. On the other hand, it shows there's still plenty of hard work to be done if the e-commerce revolution is to

reach beyond a hard core of sophisticated users.

According to the recent survey by Jupiter Communications (www.jup.com), Internet users who already shop online are very happy with the experience. The results of the survey can be found in the report "Defining the Internet Shopper: Attitudes, Objectives, and Behavior".

In the survey a healthy three-quarters of current online shoppers say that they expect to purchase more goods and services through online channels over the next year. This high level of customer satisfaction is already feeding through into the kind of shopper loyalty that traditional retailers enjoyed back in their golden age, but otherwise was

thought to be just a happy memory.

Returning shoppers

There's plenty of evidence that Internet shoppers return repeatedly to sites offering the right combination of price, service and ease-of-use.

Internet shoppers, that is people who make purchases online, account for around 35% of the total online population. The rest of the online population can be divided into a further two camps. Browsers are people who shop for goods and services online, but don't actually purchase online, while non-shoppers neither browse nor buy.

The bad news for etailers is that 45% of browsers say they

don't expect to start making

misused. This can happen. How-

online purchases is the next step, even fraudulent or bad faith

The price is right

retailers could do more to encourage consumers to manage the risk of online shopping. Retailers can encourage shoppers and educate them that they expect to see sharper pricing to encourage experimentation when buying online. It's something to take a step back from online purchases and see if they are comparable to in-store prices.

tailers can

advantage

es. It's another way retailers can offer a 20% discount on the shop price. At this point, the retailers need to find that the browsing group is the very group that needs to be convinced, say the most important thing is to make them move from browsing to buying. 60% of browsers are looking for competitive pricing to get the importance, while 40% of browsers are satisfied with the pricing they are getting. Interestingly, 90% of existing customers say they continue to price to be competitive but 57% of

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plenty of hard work
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Sharp

don't expect to start making online purchases in the next year. Not surprisingly 84% of the non-shoppers say they don't expect to make purchases in the next year.

From this information we can conclude that the goal of both individualetailers and the industry as a whole should be to convince the browsers and non-shoppers to make that all-important first online purchase. Once an etailer has managed to get the customer through the virtual door, they are likely to stick around and, over time, spend a considerable amount of money. Jupiter Communications says that it is up to the industry to take specific action to draw the browsers and non-shoppers over the barriers.

Beyond security

Security, or more accurately, the perceived lack of security remains the biggest barrier for most Internet users who don't currently shop online. Frankly, there's little the industry can do to convince users that online shopping is safe until those users try it for themselves and find they don't get burnt.

There's a lot of consumer ignorance about online security. For example, consumers tend to worry mostly about their credit card data being intercepted and

misused. This can happen. However, fraudulent or bad faith transactions are far more commonplace than simple theft.

If anything, e-commerce security fears are higher in Australia than in the US. Our banks are partly to blame for this. While US banks now encourage consumers to shop online and have even developed low interest credit cards specifically designed for online

In practice, few Australianetailers can say they offer a major price advantage over traditional outlets.

transactions, Australia's banks continue to discourage consumers from online shopping. US consumers are protected from online fraud and credit card misuse while Australians have to take their chances.

It's important to put the security issue in perspective. While it is the number one barrier to increased Internet shopping, it is certainly not the only barrier. And, more importantly, it is not insurmountable. For one, Etailers don't do enough to stress their security features. In general, fewer Internet-based credit card transactions go wrong than telephone-based transactions. Yet for some reason consumers trust the latter.

The price is right

Etailers could do more to encourage shoppers to manage the risk associated with online shopping. Existing online shoppers and browsers agree that they expect etailers to offer sharper pricing to offset the risk and experimentation required when buying online. It's one thing to take a chance with online purchases where prices are comparable

with retail prices. It's another when an etailer can offer a 20% discount over the shop price.

Underlining this point, the survey showed that the browsers, who are the very group etailers need to convince, say this is the single most important issue likely to make them switch from browsing to buying. More than 90% of browsers consider competitive pricing to be of great importance, while only 48% say they are satisfied with the online pricing they have seen to date. Interestingly, more than 90% of existing online shoppers say they consider competitive pricing to be of great importance but 57% of



this group say they are satisfied with online pricing.

This indicates that prospective Australianetailers need to give the utmost priority to pricing. It's all-important. In fact, given that online shoppers tend to stick with a limited set ofetailers, it makes sense to offer deep discounts for an extended period of time, even to the point of losing money in order to gain online market share. This explains why some Internet share prices have rocketed even though the companies continue to make losses.

In effect this strategy is already being pursued by major globaletailers such as the bookseller Amazon (**www.amazon.com**). Amazon loses about four dollars every time it fulfils an order, yet it has a well established brand name and a dominant market share in its niche. Moreover, it has a sizable loyal customer base who no longer buy books anywhere else.

The Jupiter Communications research also found that online

shoppers have difficulty comparison-shopping. In particular, they say it is hard to find alternativeetailers to make price comparisons. This indicates thatetailers are able to lock in customers, a further argument for building a customer-base at the expense of current profits.

In theory, implementing a price competitive strategy shouldn't be too difficult. After all, e-commerce tends to have low overheads when compared with traditional retailing operations. There's no need to rent expensive high profile premises, nor do premises need to be fancily furnished. In many cases,etailers don't need to have capital tied up in stock or worry about storing stock. This gives a lot of scope for cutting margins to the bone.

In practice, few Australianetailers can say they offer a major price advantage over traditional outlets. For example, most of the Australian sites selling music CDs offer a discount on rec-

ommended retail prices. Yet, the reality is that most traditional CD shops offer similar or better discounts, particularly on budget and back catalogue items. What's more, Australia's CDetailers typically add postage costs to the buy price, which effectively pushes the price of CDs up past recommended retail prices.

Worth pursuing

The rewards for thoseetailers who can convert non-shopping users into online buyers are considerable. Over the long haul their repeat business will be highly profitable. But there's another reason this approach is worth pursuing. The next three years will see a doubling in the number of people online. Most of the newcomers will be online shopping sceptics. Learning how to attract today's non-shoppers will make it easier to grab the new business too. ●

Marc Phillips can be contacted at neted@netguide.aust.com



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TECH SUPPORT>>

This month's column comes straight from the team at NetGuide. It covers everything from the difference between a search engine and a directory to using links to surf the Net. For further frequently asked questions, head for our Web site at www.netguide.au.com.

What's the difference between an Internet guide/directory and a search engine?

Broadly speaking, if the Internet were a book, an Internet guide/directory would be the table of contents and a search engine would be the index.

How does an Internet directory work?

Internet directories organise Web sites into common categories or topics. In the case of the Internet, the "book" is so big even the table of contents needs its own table of contents. That's why most Internet directories start with top-level categories — like 'Entertainment' and let you "drill down" to more and more specific topics, like 'Actors & Actresses', then on to 'Lucy Lawless'. Internet directories like Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com.au) and Looksmart (www.looksmart.com.au) are compiled by human surfers who review each site and place it in

the most appropriate category so users can find what they're after more easily.

How does a search engine work?

Search engines like Anzwers (www.anzwers.com.au) and Alta Vista (www.altavista.com) act like an index for the Web. They constantly run software called "robots" or "crawlers" that read and index the entire text of Web sites and use that information to form a database of keywords that can be searched from the search engines homepage. They then save the data alphabetically, so rather than browsing through the listings, you can search through them by entering a word or words that sum up what you're looking for.

How do I know when to use an Internet directory and when to use a search engine?

The best answer is — use both. For example, if you're interested in researching your family tree on the Web, you might use an Internet directory to find sites on genealogy. If you're looking for a more specific topic, such as the manifest of a ship that an ancestor came to Australia on, you might try a specific search through a search engine. A good rule of thumb is, if your topic is general, use an Internet directory, if your topic is very specific, use a search engine.

Is there a way to use a search engine and an Internet directory at the same time?

Yes — searchable Internet directories. Here you can enter a search word or phrase and the site will look at its Internet directory for matches. It will also look in its own or a partner's search engine for matches. The result — you get the best of both worlds. For example, Yahoo! (an Internet directory)

has partnered with Inktomi (a search engine) to provide both types of results for users — individual Web sites and Web pages that match the request.

Try a variety of services and see which ones serve you the best. Bookmark those for further reference, but don't forget to mix it up every so often. All Internet directories and search engines are constantly updating their data, and a successful surfer is one that is comfortable using a combination of services.

How do I keep up-to-date with new stuff on the Web?

Many Web sites specialise in filtering the Web — weeding out the best, the newest, the weirdest sites available and making them easier to find. Some sites feature a different link every day or week. Yahoo! Australia & NZ offers a weekly updated "picks" page (www.yahoo.com.au/picks), which points to the most recently listed sites on Yahoo! Along the same lines, Netscape offers a "what's new" section (www.netscape.com/netcenter/new.html), which features new and notable sites. Finally, there's What's New Too! (newtoo.manifest.com), which will give you a listing of the latest stuff on the Net.

OzSearch (www.ozsearch.com.au) has regular updates of new Web sites in Australia. There are plenty of other sites that specialise in "new" resources (the majority of them still US focused) — try entering "what's new" into your favourite guide or search engine.

What about links?

Links are a great way to surf around related sites. You'll find that the majority of Web sites offer their own collection of related links. For example, a fan's cricket site may include a handful of links to other great cricket sites. A site about making cakes may include links to other sites about baking, or desserts in general. It's this type of linking that makes the Web a "web" in the true sense of the word. And as a surfer, you can take advantage of other people's explorations. The next time you visit one of your own preferred sites, look for the links. You might find yourself headed in an unexpected, somewhat "cool" direction.

What is meant by "cool" sites?

On the Net, "cool" is the term for anything that's worth a look. Of course, 'worth a look'

doesn't mean it's useful! The sites may be well-designed, or particularly weird, bad or funny, or any number of other "cool" criteria. One of the best places to find out what's cool is Project Cool Sightings (www.projectcool.com/sightings), the originator of the "cool" craze. ●

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Netwide Solutions Pty Ltd (03) 9897 1121	www.greentree.com.au	info@netwide.com.au
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Cartoon Internet (Melb) (0413) 930 546	www.bigfoot.com/~thecartoons	cartoons@ihug.com	\$8/hr
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— contact Sam Tomlinson at samt@netguide.aust.com

continued from overleaf →

Propaganda has played an important roll in motivating nations to go to war. Anti-war campaigners and Serbians have adapted it to the Net. Government supplied pictures of NATO warplanes being shot down (one was so clear and close up you could almost read the F16's number plates), photos of the coffins of NATO troops (especially American) being smuggled out into Greece, and Serbian government tallies of dozens of downed NATO planes, filtered through email from individuals and mailing lists. Perhaps there is some truth in these updates — most claim we are being misled by western media reports. Classified information tends to filter out over time, so we'll have to wait and see.

The importance of the media (and governments' 'public relations' in war) was highlighted when America lost support at home for the Vietnam War. Serbians have done well to target the gatekeepers this time around. Even if you manage to block some of them and ignore most of them, just glancing at the subject heading or the attached photo can have an effect on you over time. The desired effect is that people ask the question, 'who is the enemy here?' I certainly thought twice about the conflict and about the information filtering through Western news agencies such as CNN (www.cnn.com).

Despite NATO's efforts to keep the lid somewhat on its operations in Serbia, news, come propaganda, come carnage updates are just an email away. The world is now connected. As long as people have power and live phone lines, the protest mail will keep pouring in — it's unstoppable. Not everything on the Net is though. For instance, the Serbian authorities did manage to close down the country's own independent radio station, B92 (www.b92.net), which was streaming information to the world and not complying with the rules.

Everyone, I'm sure, doesn't experience the barrage of email that came my way (although it would be interesting to know how many *NetGuide* readers did receive them), and I'm not writing here to whinge about it. I'm just pointing out the Internet has added a dimension to international conflict that we have not seen before, and this type of digital propaganda could change the course of future conflicts. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the bombs will have stopped dropping, the troops will be back home and the Albanian people of Kosovo will have some sort of chance to live normal lives. That accomplished, I won't be surprised to see *The Art of Digital Warfare* at my local library in a year or two. ■

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Digital warfare

IN THE LAST MONTH I have been besieged by a wave of email from Serbians and from Serbian sympathisers. As soon as the NATO air strikes began, the isolated country struck back at hundreds of news outlets — from newspapers to television and radio stations via the Internet. The first wave came suddenly. One morning I watched dozens of emails, many with photos attached, come rolling in from the mail server. I think I read the first twenty and maybe replied to about two. Then I started deleting randomly.

A second wave of email buzzed around the Net as news agencies replied to the numerous mailing lists we'd been put on to, asking to be removed. Some Web-masters asked politely, some succinctly and others quite harshly. None were heeded. Instead these requests were mailed to everyone on the lists as they rebounded. It became a mini tsunami of digital outcry from both sides.

After blocking the four or five email lists I had been put onto using my mail client, the third wave of email started. These were from individuals who had been posted the mailing lists and had started lists of their own. Some of the email came as fat files carrying graphic images of the results of NATO bombing. Many were shocking and recounted how close bombs had come and what damage was done.

I wouldn't be as callous as to call this email spam — although I didn't want to see fresh corpses every morning at the start of work. Most were heartfelt-pleas to understand the hardship of the ordinary Serbians — from doctors, lawyers, parents and children — who were affected by the bombing and to stop the attack. UK and US residents (presumably with Ser-

bian heritage) joined into the orgy of email too, condemning the US as oppressors, Clinton as the new Hitler and NATO as an organisation of warmongers. Most denied there was any refugee crisis in Kosovo and their surrounding countries, and instead pointed out inconsistencies in the allies' media reports they found while surfing foreign news services.

This wave of email was no freak phenomenon. Someone or some group has taken control of organising the wave of digital warfare — most probably a government body like a university (www.aic.org.yu/English/). The effect was to clog up networks around the world, push Serbian government propaganda overseas and make Net citizens aware that innocent lives are being taken.

View to a kill

I also received an email attachment of the video footage captured by a laser guided missile approaching a Serbian target. Or so it appeared. To my horror, as the missile approaches its target — some type of building within Serbia — you could see a distinct image of a man running away from the structure. Talk about voyeurism to the extreme — a bomb's eye view of a kill. We've seen it on television during the Gulf War, now email it to a friend and watch it at your viewing leisure. There's something twisted about that.

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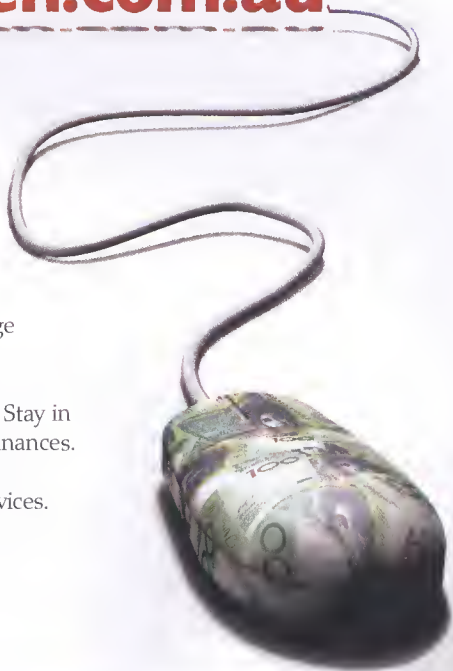
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